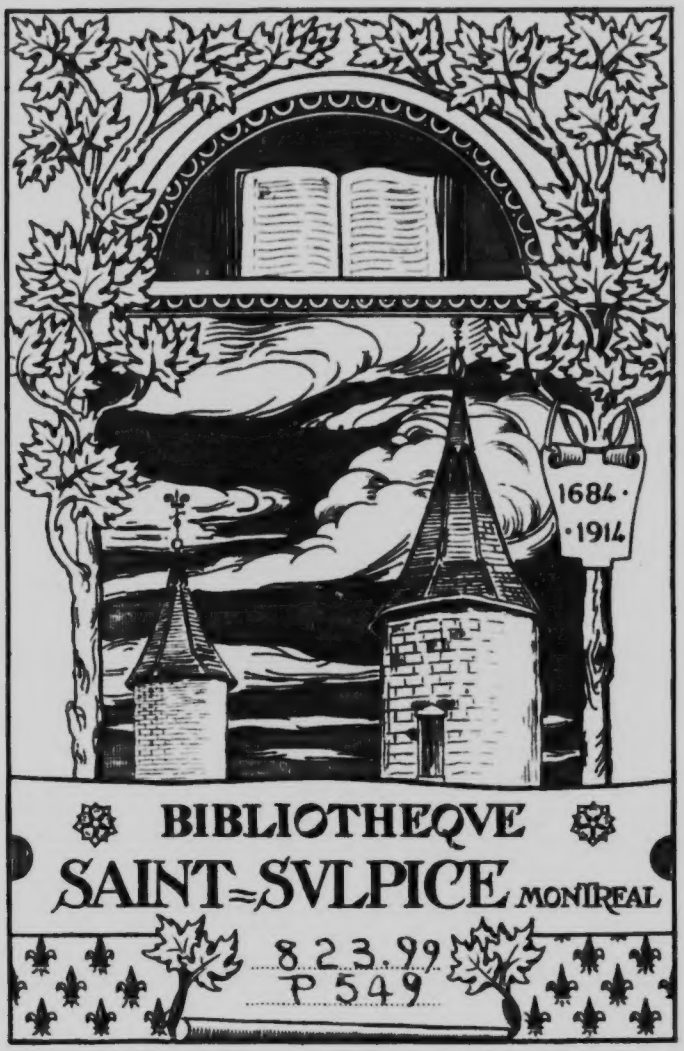
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THE LOVERS

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THE LOVERS

A ROMANCE

By

EDEN PHILLPOTTS

Author of "The Mother," "The Secret Woman," "The Mother of the Man"

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TORONTO

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CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I	A Man of God and a Man of War lament the Times and stand Fire	7
II	Wherein appear Heroines Twain and the Green-eyed Monster snarls somewhat — to no Purpose	17
III	Miranda glimpses Ferdinand and a Battle of Heavy-weights is spoiled	29
IV	The Old Saw is disproved and a Man is Lucky in Love and Lucky in Life	42
V	In which a Maiden's Heart beats high	49
VI	Introducing the Worst Man in Dartmoor — and the Best	64
VII	A Gentleman of the Road fires his Pistol and misses his Aim	78
VIII	Felix Godolphin begins to set the World Right	93
IX	Richard Bolt earns Three Guineas	102
X	An Inch of Bayonet makes all the Difference	116
XI	A Heart is given for a Heart after the Immemorial Plan	128
XII	Remorse takes Shape of a Grey Frieze Coat	141
XIII	Felix Godolphin finds his New Friends lacking Enterprise	154
XIV	In which General Sir Archer Godolphin comes by a Short Cut to the Gallows	171
XV	Trueman Trinny sports 'Pink' and hunts a Doctor	186

CHAP.		PAGE
XVI	Benjamin Gun makes a Second Bid for Freedom and a Red-coat shoots straight	199
XVII	'Greater Love hath no Man than This . . .'	212
XVIII	Wherein Two Old Men find themselves not too Old to learn	225
XIX	Jacko Caunter trusts no Man	239
XX	Mr. Blackadder's Ambition leads him to seek a New Country and stand for Law and Order	251
XXI	In which a Pitcher goes once too often to the Well	264
XXII	How Mr. Trinny started to hunt Foxes and again was disappointed	280
XXIII	Robert Burgoyne is called to show what he is made of	290
XXIV	Robert Burgoyne plays the Girl	301
XXV	The Majesty of the Law is upheld	316
XXVI	Wherein it appears that All Men have not their Price	324
XXVII	The Hill of Heavitree justifies its Name	345
XXVIII	A Hunchback rides with the Dead and terrifies the Living	353
XXIX	Mr. Trinny eases a Father's Heart and unfolds a Marvellous Tale	363
XXX	Wherein the Peace is ratified	374
XXXI	'The Only Pretty Ring Time'	385
XXXII	The 'Sea Lion' sails away	392

The Lovers

CHAPTER I

A MAN OF GOD AND A MAN OF WAR LAMENT THE TIMES AND STAND FIRE

THE road flung itself out naked and free, mile after rolling mile, along the Moor. It climbed the hills, fell into the valleys, crossed the rivers by bridges or fords, climbed again, and finally, reduced to a white thread, passed into the far horizon and vanished through a gap between stone-crowned tors.

Along it, under the brief sunset glow of an October evening, two men went slowly together, and one walked sedately on legs as thin and long as a stork, while the other stumped with a stick and a timber toe, for his right leg, from the middle thigh downward, remained at Gibraltar when he returned from the memorable siege of that fortress, a hero.

And now, in the early years of the nineteenth century, his country was at grips with America and France and he could only look on, and bark, and wish he was young again.

Beside General Sir Archer Godolphin went his brother, the Reverend Septimus. The soldier was short and stout. At a little distance he looked like a gigantic peg-top that had grown a human leg to steady its gyrations. His head was small and covered with close-cropped white hair; his immense white moustache flew away to port and starboard, like a trail of steam; his eyes were bright

and of a fearless blue. Energy, courage, and pugnacity distinguished his countenance and his voice was a challenge. But his brother—a tall, thin, black-clad man, with a pensive face, high brows, and scholarly eyes — though unlike him in most views, opinions, and ambitions — shared his pride and his patriotism, while mingling both with an element of trust in Providence that the soldier did not exhibit. Sir Archer claimed this trust, however, and often, when setting things right with a loud voice and clenched fist, he would suddenly remember his profession of faith, refer the problem to higher powers, and admit that the end would doubtless be justified, though the means employed passed the intelligence of a plain soldier like himself.

The brothers walked together to Sir Archer's moorland estate of Prince Hall in the Dartmoors, while the rolling waste burnt red about them and the acres of the dying fern glowed with auburn light.

"It is very well to say, 'Put your trust in God,' Seppy. It is well, but it is superfluous. Have I not done so all my life? I lost my lady — snatched away by smallpox in her three-and-twentieth year — and still I trusted; I lost my leg — snatched away in a Gibraltar casemate by a Spanish cannon-ball during its five-and-thirtieth year, and with that loss went all hope of the bâton; but still I trusted. My boy is a rash and reckless spirit packed with vile opinions — worse than a Whig; but still I trust and hope that he may be guided into the right road rather than goaded into it by cruel experience. My girl, my Miranda ——" He stopped, and a great light and happiness filled his face. "Doth not a daughter like that make amends?"

"An angel."

"Who will take to herself wings. I know that — I face it. Probably few men are more temperate and reasonable than I, though I may be theoretically savage. You follow me. In the last appeal I always look upward and say nothing. But one has a right to criticize the times and one's fellow-man; one has a right to mourn one's country when he sees the axe at the root of the tree."

"We shall come to our own. We are only delayed by the forces of confusion. The sense of the nation never errs."

"I wish I could think so. But that is false, brother. Who lead us to-day? Where are they leading us? God knows whither. A few weeks agone I saw the marsh fires dance on Muddy Lake. 'T is a sitting in Parliament!' said I. Bad trade — bad faith — bad men and a bad war. Against France, mark you, I say nothing. She is our natural enemy, placed over against us for England to sharpen her claws upon and keep in touch with the meaning of war and her place as queen of the nations. Yea, 'Carnage is God's daughter.' The poet who wrote that is a man of profound understanding who has looked deep into the mysteries of life and death. With France we must war — for our edification and her eternal chastening, according to the Divine Will and Ordinance. But the States of America — that is another story. Our own flesh and blood to rebel!"

"And whose fault was it, brother?"

"Whose fault! You ask an Englishman that!"

"We 'll say nothing, then. We must agree to differ," answered the clergyman. "Heaven is well aware how high I rate my dear country, how dearly I love her. But in this matter was it well to carry our self-made trouble

to the God of Battles? Our own flesh and blood, as you say; but must the child suffer its mother to ill-treat it if it can defend itself? America is justified to the hilt in entering upon this war, and, since we are in it, I tell you frankly, Archer, that you sink from your own high standards of chivalry and justice when you discuss Americans. They are a noble people with a noble destiny."

"I am always patient with you, Seppy; but, as brother to brother, I may say that to side against your country and praise the serpent that she has cherished in her bosom; to stand shoulder to shoulder with these recalcitrant States, is to earn the cold hospitality of yonder War Prison. Have a care or I shall suspect that my son Felix — his damnable opinions — have been sucked from a fountain that ——"

Septimus put his hand on his brother's shoulder.

"Think not the lad's uncle and paternal gossip would say any evil or doubtful thing in his ear, dear brother. I preach patience, self-control, obedience to authority, veneration to goodness, loyalty to Church and Crown. No rebel I. But man is man, and these American prisoners, shut up where that great, grey bee-hive hums under the sunset light — the thousands of valiant and noble men pent yonder — are made in their Maker's image even as you and I. Brother, I have been among them, as you know. I have celebrated the Church's rites in the prison and seldom ministered before more disciplined and seemly congregations."

"You pandered to them."

"Not so. Ask Commander Short. I preached Christ — the Saviour of the World — Who died to save these sailor-men as well as all the hosts that have been and shall

be. I made common cause with them before the Throne and prayed for the prisoners and captives and those who watch and wait in the mother-land for their return."

Sir Archer shrugged his shoulders.

"The riff-raff and out-scouring of the States. A mob of turbulent, crafty mariners, cunning as weasels, unscrupulous as hawks. They break their parole——"

"Be just, brother; 't was a Frenchman who ran away from Ashburton."

"They strive to escape, and flout the soldiers and tempt the turnkeys and plan subtle means of evading authority and set their guards at naught."

"What did you do at Gibraltar when taken prisoner in a sortie? Was not your escape from Algeciras the wonder of the hour?"

"Under Providence — under Providence. But these fellows — what care they for Providence? The French are different. The French are gentlemen. I polished my 'parlez-vous' on General Rochambeau but yesterday. A personal friend of Boney, he is, and feels sure, as he is of sunrise, that Napoleon will come and rescue him and his fellow-prisoners before the war is ended! After Monday next the General designs to dress daily in his uniform, so that he may be ready to welcome Boney to Ockery Cottage! Poor fellow — if we soldiers believed in God like the French believe in Boney, we should soon inherit the whole earth."

"'T is the meek will do that, my brave brother. And you err in particulars. To call the American prisoners 'scum and riff-raff' is to speak away from the book. To strike an average they compare very favourably in education and manners with our own tars. There is nothing to choose, and their officers and leaders are well-born,

courteous gentlemen, many of old English families, with undisguised love for the old country handed down to them as a heritage of blood. There are a hundred distinguished Americans in the War Prison, and not a few bide there for choice and share the cruel hardships and misery meted out to the herd, for loyalty to their poor companions. What say you to that?"

"I mourn the necessity for cruelty and hardship; but these things must be. They cannot expect feather pillows and champagne breakfasts."

"True; but they have a right to expect good faith, honourable treatment, and the realization of promises given in all solemnity. I tell you that things are not as they should be in the prisons, and the suffering is terrible. With winter upon us worse may overtake them. You are a hero and you have seen all sides of war. It would become you well to speak with Commandant Short and give him the benefit of your immense experience. He means well, but he is ignorant and lends a ready ear to subordinates and turnkeys. There are grave grievances. I spoke after service on Sunday with one Robert Burgoyne, a wealthy man from the state of Vermont. His ancestors sailed in the *Mayflower*."

"No doubt they all say that."

"In his case it is true. A young, well-educated gentleman is he, and a passionate devotion to his country marks him. There was a noble humility in the man and a patience and wisdom perhaps only to be won in war's terrible school. He, too, is a hero throughout the prisons. His career, which he narrated with the utmost modesty and simple truth, would fire your blood and rejoice your spirit. Only a brave man can properly honour a brave man."

They had now passed from the Moor road between two great pillars of granite surmounted by heraldic griffins. From this outer entrance extended a long avenue of wind-worn beech trees; and suddenly here a pheasant whirred low across their path not five yards before them. At the same moment an invisible sportsman discharged a fowling-piece from behind the hedge and a heavy charge of shot screamed across the eyes of Sir Archer and his brother.

By happy chance not a pellet struck either, but only a miracle of good fortune prevented an accident. The pheasant fared less happily, and fell bunched up and dead at Sir Archer's feet. At the same moment a big red setter leapt over the hedge and a young man with a smoking gun climbed after him.

"God's life!" swore the knight—"'t is you, you crack-brained fool, of course—you and none other. That I—a Godolphin—should have got such a numskull for a son!"

The young man fell back and stood still. He made a fine picture thus suddenly arrested in his movement. He was tall and lightly built, and so just were his proportions that one did not perceive his great height until a man of average size stood beside him. Felix Godolphin was fair like his father, but a sulky expression marked his face. It was haughty and shy. Now sorrow struck him dumb and very real terror dominated every other emotion. His lips parted; his ruddy skin grew pale and sweat dabbled his forehead.

"Thank God!" he said. "Thank God I did you no hurt, sir—and you, Uncle Septimus."

"Be sure that we shall do so, too, Felix. Felix would have been Felix no more had that heavy charge sped

less truly. With my long nose 't is sure I must have missed the pellets by a fraction."

Thus the clergyman strove to make light of the matter.

"Forgive me, father," pleaded the youth. "I never guessed nor dreamed that a soul was in the drive."

"Feckless wretch! Let it be a lesson to you. I warn you, be in no haste to end my days, for life would take on a very different colour for you were it to depart from me," said Sir Archer. "Pick up yonder bird and gang your way. I wish to be alone."

The cowed youngster obeyed, stuffed his pheasant into a game-bag that was slung on his back, and then stood still while his elders proceeded down the drive. Presently a voice came from the hedge and another face looked over it. A neighbouring farmer had been shooting with young Godolphin.

"By Gor!" he said. "I 'm glad 't was you fired that shot and not I, master."

The other did not immediately answer. His adventure had shaken him, but now he came slowly to himself; his mouth hardened and his lip curled scornfully.

"Did you mark how my father set me down? 'A numskull,' 'a crack-brained fool,' 'a feckless wretch'! He cannot see that such an accident was worse for me than him. There was no fault. Such an unfortunate thing might have overtaken any man. He hates me, Bolt; he hates me!"

His companion looked uncomfortable and evidently wished himself away. He too was a son of Anak, a man obviously and coarsely large, with immense hands and feet and a great bull-neck that supported a head too small for the mighty torso beneath it. Richard Bolt, a small farmer from the little homestead of Dart Hollow,

stood six feet three and had won some fame as champion wrestler of the Dartmoors. He was a man of mingled characteristics and suffered from the disabilities peculiar to natures inherently fine. He could be jealous; and of late chance had cruelly placed him in circumstances that woke the green-eyed monster in his great breast. He was distracted about his private affairs; but these he hid from all men, and Felix Godolphin only knew him afield as a congenial spirit and a fine sportsman — a man above a small thought or mean deed. Richard was dark of hue, snake-headed, and grey-eyed. A saturnine and moody disposition belonged to the farmer, and it was some parity of mind and instinct that drew the well-born man to him. Bolt — an orphan, and thirty years old — lived alone save for the company of one hind.

He congratulated Felix on the issue of the accident and foretold that all would soon be well.

"Sir Archer knows not how to bear malice, but a soldier's tongue can cut as well as his sword sometimes, it seems."

"If he 'd been frightened I 'd have forgiven him," said the younger sportsman, "but feared he was not. He 's stood fire before to-day. He 'd have made naught of it had you fired the shot, Dick. But any stick is good enough to beat such a dog as I. He cares nothing for me and wishes me away. He hates my principles and foams with anger when I press home a point sometimes, or defeat him in argument. However, these things are no business of yours. So, good-night, Dick. We 'll meet again anon when the golden plover are come."

"Give you good-night, Master Felix," said the farmer. Then he shouldered a gun and departed for home, while Godolphin and his red dog proceeded up the avenue.

It extended half a mile, then curved easterly and revealed a fine low house with a white front and a roof of heavy thatch. Prince Hall faced the south and stood in a deep grove of pine and fir. A little garth spread before the windows, and then meadow-land stretched from a 'ha-ha' and sank to winding Dart, where she foamed and flashed by many a fall and stickle beneath. A bridge of one span leapt the river here, and on the farther side other plantations fledged the lower slopes before they rose again and swept upward into the Moor.

The manor of Prince Hall was independent of Duchy jurisdiction, and though in the midst of the Forest of Dartmoor, belonged to a private family. For two hundred years indeed had Godolphins owned it, and the present owner succeeded to this ancient tenement on the death of his elder brother. Here he dwelt with his boy and girl and their uncle Septimus. Sir Archer only belonged to a cadet branch of the Godolphin family, but the most illustrious living member of the clan was he, and none knew the fact better than himself.

CHAPTER II

WHEREIN APPEAR HEROINES TWAIN AND THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER SNARLS SOMEWHAT — TO NO PURPOSE

A MAN and a girl were walking together, heavily laden, over the wastes of the Moor. The last glory of summer still haunted the September heath, and a sky of blue and silver reflected something of its light upon the fading heather and over the grassy places already growing sere and grey. As yet the fern was standing, but the colours of death had crept over it, and here a wash of dun and ochre dimmed the splendour of the brake, and here single scattered fronds had turned to gold and now held up the banners of autumn for the pomp of her coming.

Silence reigned between the travellers. There was no sound but the swish of the wiry heather against the man's gaiters, and as he strode forward, taking one pace to his companion's two, yellow pollen puffed from the fading inflorescence of the heath and powdered his leathern leggings to the knee.

Dartmoor was uttering her last smile and song of beauty before sinking again into austere sobriety and reticence. Little larks rose and fluttered before the pedestrians; sometimes a lizard scrambled off a mossy stone; sometimes a grass-snake uncurled and streamed away at their approach. The rolling hills spread and faded into the midst of the horizon. Sheep and cattle clothed

the undulations; and other signs of life there were none save where, still far away upon the immense bosom of the Moor, there spread a grey circle of granite, dwarfed by distance to a mere fairy-ring cast here in midmost desolation of the tors.

Dark and fair were the man and woman. Him indeed we already know, for it was Richard Bolt who tramped now from his farm of Dart Hollow with two great baskets, full laden for a strange market; and his companion, Charity Caunter, proceeded on the same errand.

Daughter was she of one John Caunter, master of Bair Down Farm, nigh Two Bridges; but the girl resembled her mother and was fair to see. 'Farmer Jacko,' as Mr. Caunter was called by all men, had little charm of appearance or manner, while Mary, his wife, was well favoured and of a kindly spirit. It happened luckily, therefore, that she had proved prepotent in their only child.

Bolt's black eyes played with hungry love like a fire; but Charity's were grey as the mist, and if passion glimmered in them, it was lit and wakened by memory and by anticipation. The man who towered beside her owned no part in it. With a frown almost savage he looked down at his companion. Then he extended his arm and added one of her heavy baskets to his own load.

"Let be, Dick," she said. "I can bear it easily. You have enough to carry."

"You 'm weary."

"Not I — so happy as a bird."

Bolt fixed his eyes on the grey ring of stone which lay ahead of them.

"Curse the Yankee rebel! 'T is him as makes your burden light."

"Doan't 'e speak like that! Ban't it enough for them to suffer there? Would you call a curse on the prisoners and captives, Richard? Think of it — their only sin that they fought for their country! Would you curse the Englishmen in their prisons? Remember their mothers and sweethearts, their wives and little childer far away — hoping and fearing and praying God to send peace, so that their men-folk can go back to 'em."

"'Sweethearts'! Would to God as all their sweethearts were in their own country! Ban't I right to cuss? Who was it came between you and me, Cherry? Were n't we so good as tokened afore this here American sailor-man———?"

"Never!" she said quietly. "Never, dear Dick. Very true friends, I grant 'e — ever since I was born, you might say — ever since, as little maid and big lad, us went wool-gathering together, and you showed me where the thorny sheep-runs were and the best wool could be gathered off the brambles. But love you with the love you want and deserve — I never did that. Not you nor any other man — till I met — him."

The farmer's dark face wrinkled and he spoke harshly.

"More fool you, then! What can come of this? Look ahead — look all round it. Granted the chap escapes death. Granted he won't be among them as perish like flies under the prison evil that 's raging amongst 'em. Granted the cold won't kill him, for he 's hard and strong. Granted that when some day peace comes — peace! there's no peace for me — granted he 's free sooner or later. What then? You know your father, Farmer Jacko, would sooner you married a fiend from the pit than

an American man. He rages when he talks about 'em. And this sailor — a pauper — ignorant of our ways and trained by his evil luck to hate the sight of Dartmoor for ever. What should he do here? Can he settle down and live a moor-man's life? Will he plough with a pair of oxen — him that 's only used to the rolling sea? Will he plod upon the land, and work for hire, and scrape pence, and live on tail corn and sour cider for love of you? Will he sing so small — a fighting man, a war-dog wi' the blood-call in him, the lust of battle in his veins? Never! Human nature ban't going to change at your beck."

"He loves me, Dick."

"For what he can get. A coaxing, carneying rogue! He loves what you carry in your baskets and what you give without payment. Hunger makes a lie look a light thing. Belike when all 's said you are on a wild-goose chase."

"Speak no more," she answered, and her red cheeks paled a little and her full bosom lifted. "My heart sees clearer than your eyes, Richard; and for that matter, my heart 's very sore to think that you can see so crooked. The man's far off what you think him. For that matter you know better than your words. You, that are honest yourself, can very well judge of an honest man."

"Honest or not honest, 't is odds but one of us will be the death of the other yet," he answered, and his deep voice rolled harshly on her ear. She shivered and sighed.

"'T is cruel and wicked in you to say such things. You love yourself, not me. You 're a coward for all your great thews and mighty voice — a coward to speak so against one that never did you any ill. Love for me has poisoned you, Richard. I 'm thinking love can't be a

very sweet thing if it breeds such foul thoughts. You — you that was ever so honest and patient and true — till — till that man came into my life."

"Too patient. Patience be a quality of fools and now I know it. If I 'd axed afore you ever set eyes on him, you 'd have said 'yes'."

Again she shook her head sadly, while silence fell between them. But not the sorrow that clouded her face could lessen Cherry's charm, for she was more than handsome and made a beautiful picture. Her yellow hair slipped like a tangle of spun gold from under her red-riding-hood; her brown homespun gown was short; her sturdy boots were something too large for the feet within them. Her lips were full and fresh, and exertion kept them apart as she tramped along. She was of good height for a woman and planned on a generous model. Her nature was simple, trustful, and sanguine. Life had not bruised her yet or broken her natural will to joy. Existence presented countless difficulties indeed at this juncture, but she was young; she loved passionately and was passionately loved. Naught else mattered, and she trusted the future like a child trusts to-morrow. She was happy and hopeful, and sang the live-long day.

Just now, however, she was in no singing mood.

"I must rest awhile," she said, and set down her basket where a spring bubbled by the way. The sand whence it arose danced in the water, then sank down, and the new-born rillet rolled from the sphagna beds of its cradle with increasing music and volume as it wound glimmering to join another and a larger stream in the vale beneath. Charity Caunter drank of the spring and, sitting down, threw off her hood and fanned herself.

"To grow cooler for his kisses," sneered the man.

Her eyes flashed and a sharp answer leapt to her tongue. But she did not make it. Her anger was dissolved into action instead of speech. She leapt up and took both her baskets, while he lamented his coarse speech and humbly begged for forgiveness.

"I 'm sorry — I 'm shamed," he said.

There came an interruption, and the girl very thankfully welcomed it. From a combe in the Moor appeared suddenly two riders — a man and woman.

"'T is Master Godolphin and Mistress Miranda!" cried Charity. "What a brave sight to see her mounted!"

Such ingenuous admiration struck the farmer.

"She 's another that be set for the fall of men," he answered. "After you, she 's the fairest thing as ever came out of Dartmoor."

The girl laughed.

"'After me'! I ban't worthy to hold her looking-glass or tie her shoe-string. Never was such a lovely maiden; and you know it."

The riders drew rein and proceeded beside Richard and Charity. Felix instantly went to the girl's assistance and despite her protestations lifted her basket and supported it on his saddle's crupper.

"We 're bound the same way — for Prince's Town," he said. "And 't is well to be useful sometimes, Miss Cherry. They say of me that I do less good in the world than the ponies that crop the heath."

He chaffed her awhile, then fell back to talk sport with the farmer. Thereupon his sister, who little liked the dour Richard, touched her cob and proceeded beside Charity.

Miranda was like her brother — Greek of face, a little

cold, a little hard — but only with the self-reliance of youth. She had not thought much as yet, and her beautiful face, with eyes as blue as her father's, still remained an untroubled piece of loveliness whereon Demeter's finger had traced no line. The happiness and peace of it was apparent; life brimmed out of it like light. She went under an aura of high spirits unshadowed by sorrow, untried by love or care. She was a brunette, of slight figure, yet not so slight as her riding-habit and horse made her appear. She wore green, and her gauntlets, and her hat and its flowing feather were all black.

"We go to visit the Commandant and see the prison," she said. "But tell it not again; for I greatly fear my father would be angered. You understand that, Cherry, for Farmer Caunter is as bad as Sir Archer. I think they love to get together and rail at the times. But don't say that you hate the Americans, too, Cherry. I shall never love you again, or come to see you when I am passing by, if you think cruel things against 'em."

The other girl laughed and looked up at Miranda.

"Not I, mistress! The man — the man I love 's among 'em."

"Cherry! Do you mean it?"

"That I do. Never was his like."

"'T was rumoured that Farmer Bolt——"

"Not by me. I like Richard well enough; but I don't love him. Ah! you should see my man!"

"Maybe I shall see him. We 're on our way to the War Prison now — to meet others, and take our dinner with the Commandant. I 'll ask him to bring us in the market after, if it may be done."

"You can't mistake my Benjamin — so tall as Richard

there, with beautiful straw-coloured hair and eyes that laugh ever, for all his trouble. He was boatswain on the *Vermont* — a privateer fitted out by a young gentleman by the name of Burgoyne; and when the ship was sunk — fighting against two of ourn — a dozen or so of the brave chaps was saved, and all that be left of them lie yonder in Prison No. 4."

"I know — I 've heard something of it from my uncle, the parson. He 's met with Mr. Burgoyne. This is brave hearing, Cherry. You must help your lover to escape!"

The other nodded thoughtfully.

"Stranger things have happed. A girl or two as I could name have brought off more than one safe and sound. My Ben be very wishful to get out. They thought they 'd all be free, poor chaps; but just as their wonderful tunnel was made and everything ready for 'em to be off, one of their own men peached and all was discovered."

"Wretch! They ought to have torn him to pieces!"

"And so they ought; and so they would; but he never went back among 'em. They call him Judas now — Judas Bagley. He got money for his trouble and a free pardon."

"He 'll go haunted to his grave. To think such a vile creature lives! But tell me more — more about your Benjamin. Love won't run smooth with you, Cherry — true love never does. Your father——"

"Ess fay! 'T will be a hard matter; but us ban't feared. 'I was born laughing and I shall die laughing.' That 's what my Ben says of himself."

They chattered, and Miranda's enthusiasm fired the other to talk freely.

"I dearly love a mystery, and never can a girl keep a

secret like me," vowed Sir Archer's daughter. "Tell me how I may do so and I 'll help you with all my heart, and love the adventure dearly!"

Meanwhile the men discussed another subject, and it might have been noted while the maiden of the Godolphins thirsted for some incident which should bear the colour of romance and brighten life, the same instinct, natural to youth, hope, and high spirits, appeared in her brother. He spurned convention, indulged in democratic opinions, and found himself ever on the side of the oppressed and downtrodden, the enemy of society and even the enemy of his country. A lawless bent dominated him and he loved the lawless. He was ill-balanced and hot-headed, but he was also brave; he possessed a morbid sense of justice and a great thirst to take a hand in the game of life. He desired to assert himself, but knew no discipline and resented control. He had quarrelled radically with Sir Archer, by refusing to go into the army, and the difference, though patched up, had left painful wounds both in the old heart and the young one. There was neither sympathy nor understanding between father and son. Indeed, the young man had few friends, for none of his set shared his opinions or saw, underlying them, a fine and generous nature that only needed control and sane guidance.

He spoke now and declared some fellow-feeling with certain notorious rogues.

"There 's little doubt they be on the Moor," said Bolt. "Them famous highwaymen, I mean — Blackadder and Will Workman. Salisbury Plain has been their hunting ground for many a long month, but they 've made it too hot to hold 'em and now are after giving the Dartymoors a turn. Little enough they 'll squeeze

out of our empty pockets! But 't is an outrage and a burning disgrace that such rogues should go free and laugh at the nation. And I hope that a Devonshire man will lay 'em by the heels afore they be much older."

"Tell me not that, Richard," answered Felix Godolphin. "I hate the craven herd that flock like sheep — each to shelter behind the other. There 's a mean spirit abroad, and men are no better than a cowardice of curs. They run and yelp in crowds — to hide their craven spirits. I 'm for these fellows, and I admire their pluck. Let 'em trade on their courage and shear the bleating sheep where they can. 'T is the difference between a game fox and a pack of hounds — trundle-tailed cowards for all their fine music. And my heart goeth with the fox in every chase, and I 'm well pleased when he saves his brush. Blackadder and Workman have stood before hounds for two years, and their names make women turn white and men — so to call 'em — shiver. That 's something; and if they ease a few of our fat, worthless folk — gentle or simple — what care I? I hope 't will be my lot to fall in with 'em, for they 'd understand the like of me and I 'd neighbour very well with them!"

But Bolt shook his head.

"Your ideas will land you in an ugly place some day, Master Felix. Law and order be stronger than rebellion in the upshot, same as a pack of hounds be stronger than the fox. 'T is only a question of time. They 'll have him sooner or late. You look at they poor rames[1] of men hanging in chains on Cocks Tor and Gibbet Hill nigh Lydford down Mary Tavy way. No doubt they thought as you think, and strutted it very bravely once."

"They did," said Felix, "and 't was a wicked shame to

[1] *Rames.* Skeletons.

hang 'em and then rig them there, like dead crows, to fright the living ones. But such injustice don't fright me. For sheep-stealing they died. And how came it they needed to steal sheep? What had they done that society should deny their little children bread? The hungry man has a right to steal. 'T is a human instinct. All brave men steal something, and the conqueror that steals a kingdom is prayed to as a God. Shall we hang Napoleon when we catch him? Heaven forbid!"

He aired his views and grew hot with the world's injustice, while Bolt, a man taciturn by nature, soon ceased to argue with him.

"The likes of you can only larn by experience, Master Felix," he said presently; "and I hope, when the experience overtakes 'e, that there 'll be enough left of you after to be a useful man!"

They had come on to high ground where the Moor rolled mightily round about them. Cloud-purple streaked the desolation and amorphous monsters of shadow lazily swept eastward before the western wind. Now the undulations and ridges were outlined in gloom against light; now the valleys grew dark and the battlements and wild peaks and crowns of the land rose and shone against the blue. Hugeness of earth and clarity of air marked that spectacle, where the primitive, untamed waste spread and heaved, like a frozen sea whose waves were of mingled light and darkness. Although a full mile in circumference, the War Prison seemed no greater than a nest of ants piled in the midst of this immense theatre. Human life was now visible within and about its precincts, and a straggling array of barracks and solitary dwellings stretched from the outer circumvallation. Black and yellow captives swarmed within the prison

yards; scarlet sentries dotted the walls and crept up and down upon them. From the centre of the circle, like spokes of a wheel, jutted out the five great main buildings; and where the approaching party had now reached there ascended like the murmur of rain, or cry of remote rivers, a gentle sound: the mingled voices of six thousand souls pent here until peace should return to earth once more.

At one time all races of the world had contributed to this congregation. Not French and Americans alone thronged the granite limbo, but renegade Britishers, taken fighting in the enemies' ships, Danes, Norwegians, Italians, Negroes, Eurasians, Chinese, and Malays made up the mournful human family, snatched hither from the outer world and herded under conditions of bitter suffering. Now, however, peace was just declared with France, and only Americans, English, and a handful of Negroes continued to remain in thrall.

A few hundred soldiers formed the garrison of this mighty gaol, and one Captain Short, a man ill-equipped for such difficult work, was Commandant during those turbulent and eventful months that preceded the end of the war.

CHAPTER III

MIRANDA GLIMPSES FERDINAND AND A BATTLE OF HEAVY-WEIGHTS IS SPOILED

THE moor-folk were permitted within the prison precincts at certain times for the purpose of holding a market; and this sudden outlet for their produce was gladly welcomed among the small farmers who made shift to live in their scattered homesteads round about. When market-day came, rows of boards and trestles stretched across the great prison yards and the people brought eggs and poultry, vegetables, butter, and fruit —all wares that commanded a ready sale among those who could afford to purchase them. Sometimes the food was given in exchange for trinkets made of wood or of the bones saved by the prisoners from their rations of meat. The sailors were very popular, and many a tender girl and old mother mourned the lot of these ill-clad, sorrowful hosts and gave without payment to the sick and suffering. Here and there, too, a heart was exchanged for a heart, and among the extraordinary and ingenious escapes and incidents that each day brought to light, the maidens of the Moor played their secret part and helped to make history.

Fifty men and women stood behind the stalls and a thousand Americans loitered up and down in front of them. Sentries were posted at intervals and others superintended the scene from vantage points upon the walls.

Turnkeys stood about the iron gates; in each main yard was a cachot — a dungeon within a dungeon — a squat, gloomy tomb of granite and iron — where the vicious and turbulent, the quarrelsome, the plotters, and the breakers of prison rules were incarcerated and starved, to tame them. In grotesque black and yellow jackets, threadbare and ill-fitting, shod with felt and wood, their heads covered with scarlet worsted caps, the prisoners moved about together or alone. Some laughed, jested, and kept up a running fire of jokes among themselves, or with the market people; some — anxious and careworn — emerged from the prisons, made their purchases, and vanished again; some skulked, surly and morose, amid their fellows. Those whose duty it was to cook or wait on the sick, bought of the poultry and eggs, bacon and vegetables, and departed with them. Smallpox and other diseases were rife in the prisons, and a thousand minor tragedies passed hidden from sight in sick bays and secret corners. Each night raw silent shapes carry others, still more silent, to a burial ground in the black heart of the wilderness; for Death helped many to escape.

Charity Caunter and Richard Bolt set up their stalls presently, and he helped her with the boards and trestles. She began to sell her wares, while he set down his baskets and moved here and there, speaking with other men. She paid him for his trouble on her account by arranging his butter, eggs, and ducks so that all might see them. The market people had each their set of clients, and sometimes they let a long score run until this or that hungry mariner received his next supplies from his country. The sentries were little concerned with the woman hucksters; but the men they watched closely, because there was a rumour of yet another widely concerted

effort to escape among the prisoners of No. 4 and a spy or two had hinted that help would be received from without.

As for Charity, her regular customers soon surrounded her, and foremost among them was a ridiculous burlesque of a man clad in rags. He had big brown eyes, black hair carefully twisted and tied, and a nose almost as black as his pig-tail. He had served a gun on the United States privateer *Vermont*, and during an explosion the powder had burnt his face and become ingrained.

"Lordy! how them eyes of yourn wander, missy!" he said. "If we pleased, we could rob you as easy as breaking eggs. Ah! there he comes at last — him and my other pardners!"

There was a laugh, and Charity, all blushes, glanced at the entrance, where a little party of six men, guarded by two soldiers, had just arrived. A fair, handsome fellow headed them. He stood as tall as Richard Bolt, but was of better build and more cheerful countenance. Hither came the flaxen hero of Cherry's waking and sleeping dreams, one Benjamin Gun, boatswain of the vanished privateer *Vermont*. Gun and his mates had just returned from work outside the prison walls, where much building was in hand. In one place a church neared completion — the fane sacred to St. Michael and All Angels; elsewhere a new rectory house was slowly rising, and here the sailor and his companion survivors of the *Vermont* at present toiled.

"Ben!" shouted the black-nosed man. "Here we are and here 's a brave goose, as nobody can buy, waiting very patient on Mistress Caunter's stall. Perhaps you 'll come and see what you can do. I should like to hev the creature for our mess uncommon."

Quite regardless of the chaff hurled at him, the prisoner approached Charity, beamed at her downcast lashes, and shook her hand. He was a handsome man, clean shorn and splendidly built. His jacket gaped halfway up his back, a world too small for his great shoulders; his arms were bare to the elbows and various designs of flags and anchors stared blue on his fair skin. Upon his right fore-arm appeared an ugly wound. Once there had been a girl's name pricked there; but the American maiden who first won Mr. Gun's heart married elsewhere when he joined a privateer, and now, in the light of Cherry's eyes it became necessary to eradicate this memorial of dead romance. "I can't put my arm round you while that derned jade's name is writ on it," declared the sailor.

His courting had been as open, ingenuous, and genuine as himself. Gun was a favourite with the turnkeys, and they winked sometimes and looked the other way when Benjamin went behind the cachot to help his sweetheart store her boards and trestles after market. More than kisses and promises of eternal fidelity had passed between them since he asked her to wed, for Charity was quick in device; and as both she and her sailor could write, long letters passed in all manner of hiding-places — now concealed in an apple or the belly of a fowl, now rolled in the compass of some little trinket presented by the man to his sweetheart. The time was coming to prove Charity Caunter's mettle, and of late Benjamin's letters had contained more than love.

He bought the goose and handed it to Andy Midge, the man with the black nose. The other survivors of the *Vermont* included Placid Petersen, a small, sad-faced Dane, who passed for the philosopher of the company;

Thomas Midge, his opposite, a fierce and fiery spirit, not related to Andy; Owen Seapach, the humourist of the company -- a broad, bearded, red man, once cook on the *Vermont*; Charles Miller, a Kentucky farmer, who had some education and was held the right hand of their chief; and Johnny Wood, a powder-monkey, the pet of them all and popular alike with turnkeys, soldiers, and the market folk.

Robert Burgoyne, affectionately known as "Fighting Bob," was absent at this time, nursing a sick man, but it happened that he appeared, presently, for an orderly from the Commandant called him.

The market had not proceeded above an hour when distinguished guests appeared, and Captain Short, accompanied by the friends he had entertained at mid-day dinner, strolled into the yard of Prison No. 4.

He was a thick-set, burly soldier, bluff and rather brutal in his ways — a martinet and one without imagination or the wit to see life through other eyes than his own. He appreciated power and loved to exercise it in season and out. "Short 's my name and short 's my nature," was his favourite assertion. He came now among men who hated him very heartily; but he lacked not for physical courage and was indifferent to the attitude not only of most prisoners but also of many officials.

The party, including Felix Godolphin and his sister, now stood and watched the market; then Short's coarse humour angered more than one of his visitors. One or two indeed had already shrunk from a spectacle that was painful enough. As gentlemen they felt the situation to be indecent, and wished themselves away.

"Here are our wild beasts tamed," said the Commandant, pointing to a cachot. "In these dens the wolves

and tigers have to be shut up, and I warrant you this one is seldom empty. We 're in No. 4, where the recent amazing attempt to burrow out was made. A monument to Yankee cheek and skill!"

Felix Godolphin spoke.

"Yes, faith! And but for a traitor in their own ranks, Captain. These yellow-boys would have given you the slip. No thanks to you and your lobsters that you catched them!"

Shovel started, looked angrily at his guest, and turned to Miranda.

"Your brother forgets himself," he said. "Were I not his host, he should have a rap on the knuckles for that!"

"Is Mr. Burgoyne among them?" asked the girl, not heeding his anger. "He knows my Uncle Septimus, and I have a message for him if the law allows me to deliver it."

"Your uncle must have a care," answered the soldier. "'T is well he should preach to 'the souls in prison' as he calls 'em; but 't is not well — however, if I also hear the message it can be delivered. Young Robert Burgoyne is vastly rich and lets his money go free among the sailors. 'T is a mystery to me that one who could fight as he fought should be so soft in some ways. A Don Quixote he seems — ever ready to spend on others. But we all know that fools and their money are soon parted. I like him well enough, however, for he is an educated man and worth talking to. He stands rather in the shadow of the recent rising and I was in a mind to lay him by the heels awhile, together with Stark, Newburn, M'Donovan, and other leaders. But having regard for his acts of mercy and the money that

he spends, I have left him his liberty, and tried to cultivate his friendship."

Captain Short called a soldier.

"Bid Mr. Robert Burgoyne wait on me here," he said, and the man hastened to obey. The Commandant turned again to Miranda.

"Your message?"

"Only to ask whether Mr. Burgoyne has read a certain book, which my uncle is very ready to lend him."

"Upon your honour, Miss Godolphin?"

She blushed deep rose and stared at the other.

"You are speaking to the daughter of Sir Archer Godolphin," she said quietly.

But the Commandant was not impressed.

"True, and thirty minutes agone I was speaking to the son of Sir Archer Godolphin; who hesitated not to drain a glass of my port to my prisoners! You heard what he said a moment since?"

"He, at least, hides nothing — nor do I. It may be better that we do not see Mr. Burgoyne," she answered.

But Robert Burgoyne was already at her elbow.

"Oh, say not that!" he exclaimed with a laugh; then he saluted Captain Short, carrying his hand to his head. He was of moderate stature but sturdy habit. His black, curly head was bare; his face was tanned very brown; unusual strength marked his mouth and nose, and power sat in his grey eyes. Burgoyne was not a man to pass. Even in his rough and ill-fitting frieze suit, bought of a Jew pedlar, he bore himself with distinction and dignity. An unconquerable light shone from his eyes — the light of enthusiasm and genius.

Short introduced the Godolphins.

"They are of the family of the reverend gentleman

who is in trouble for your souls," he said, "and Miss Godolphin desires to give you a message from him."

The Commandant looked at Miranda, and, with an over-acted display of breeding, went out of earshot.

"He has his lesson!" she thought.

Felix began the conversation and asked eagerly for particulars concerning the recent abortive attempt to tunnel out the prisons.

"Zounds!" he said, "if I 'd had word of it, I 'd have helped you moles from the outside and spared no trouble to bring you off.

Burgoyne laughed.

"'T was a pretty plot and very near succeeded. But I never felt hopeful. I 'll go further — though ready enough to do my share, I was n't heart-broken when we failed. Peace is within sight, in my judgment, and between the outside of these walls and the inside must have been but a choice of evils for most of us."

"You 've got many stout friends on the Moor, I promise you," said Felix, and again Burgoyne laughed and turned to the lady.

"And is Mistress Godolphin one of them?" he asked.

His voice was pleasant and he spoke with a cultured accent. Unconsciously Miranda had been looking into the face of the man and now her eyes fell before his.

"Nay," she answered. "My father is a soldier and I think with him. I would give you all good beds and — and good boots, if I could, and warm clothes against winter, and plenty to eat and drink, and all that could help to pass your time. But I should not let you out till the war is done."

"That is just and fair. Would the authorities were as just and fair! But they are not. They treat us

with unreasonable severity; they put pains and indignities upon us that we should not be called to suffer. They tempt us with bribes to go into your ships and fight against our own country. That is base, and I despise the government that can sink to it."

They chatted and Miranda gave her message. Burgoyne had not read the book, but declared a great desire to do so.

"Your uncle is a good man and a brave," he said. "And a patient too," he added. "I fear I wearied him; but he is a fine listener."

"You interested him deeply. I would we might hear your adventures," said Felix.

The other laughed again.

"Too much is made of them. My ship went down — that 's all — and a dozen men were saved, and half a hundred, already slain, had a burial worthy of heroes. But if chance serves some day I should be well pleased to tell you the story. 'T was a great fight."

"Why don't you come out on parole?" asked Felix. "There 's many gentlemen I could name who would be honoured to entertain you. Would that my father were one of them."

"I 'm well content here. There are my friends yonder — chaffering with the market people. The sole survivors of the *Vermont* are they. And one 's away, dying."

His face clouded.

"I must go back to him," he declared. Then in a moment he appeared to banish his passing gloom and turned to Miranda.

"An angel visit," he said. "A good thing to remember. I 'm blunt, you see, and pay compliments like a sailor. Prithee, tell me your name."

She told him and he spoke again.

"And Dartmoor is your Enchanted Isle? But I think your uncle, not your father, must be Prospero, for the Commandant tells me that Sir Archer would give my country short shrift."

"He speaks off the book," she declared.

The American regarded her curiously. There was a frank fearlessness about his gaze, yet it was not bold. His nature looked out of his eyes. He admired the girl's beauty and did not attempt to conceal his admiration; but there was no offence in his regard.

"I 'll warrant you sing sweetly now," he said. "You have a singing voice — so have I. 'T is a good way to while time. There 's a dozen of us caged larks here and we make capital music."

"I 'd well like to hear you sing, Mr. Burgoyne."

"I hope you may," he answered. "But the free bird warbles sweetest. Now you — does n't your music tame your father's heart?"

"No," she confessed, "it serves only to help his nap after dinner."

There came a sudden interruption to this prattle, for incidents arising out of the market challenged attention.

Richard Bolt, now busy at his stall, owing to private cares and troubles was more surly than usual, and at last an American rated the scowling farmer.

"Sakes alive! What 's the matter with you?" asked Thomas Midge. "One would think you was the prisoner and we free men."

"There 's worse things than stone walls," answered the big man, as he sold a cabbage for a halfpenny.

"So there are — granted. Smallpox, for example,

and starvation — that 's what England pays out to prisoners of war. You do well to scowl and skulk. You 're an Englishman and carry the brand of Cain on your forehead, like the rest of your dog-rotted people! I 'd rather be a Red Indian than one of you. But wait till we take your tin-pot island and sweep you neck and crop into the sea!"

It was Midge who spoke again, and Owen Seapach applauded him while the other men listened.

"How be our prisoners faring along in your prisons?" asked an old peasant, who stood at the stall beside Bolt. "Do 'e reckon your nation 's treating of 'em any better than we be treating you?"

Bolt answered for the irate American.

"I doubt if they 've got any of our men, gaffer. 'T is all one way, though they pretend different. Our ships be sweeping the sea of such rubbish as be shot down in this prison. We take their ships or sink 'em, but they can't take ours."

"That 's a tarnation lie!" roared out Benjamin Gun. "A lie, farmer, and you know it as well as any man. Else what of all this talk about exchanges?"

"Talk — yes," answered Bolt grimly. "There 's always talk when two Yankee tongues get together. 'T is all talk — and naught else — like magpies in a tree. America don't want you and your rake-helly gang back anyway — cause why? They 're glad to be well rid of such trash."

At this most unprovoked challenge Benjamin Gun lost his self-control. He glared at Bolt, then seized the farmer's stall and flung it over. Eggs, poultry, and vegetables crashed to the ground, and over the ruins strode Gun.

"Now!" he cried. "Say that again and I 'll smash your lying mouth and knock your two eyes into one!"

These men stood six feet three inches apiece, and the excited yard rejoiced at the possibility of such a battle as is seldom seen. But it was not to be. A whistle blew. Red-coats and turnkeys hurried up, and among them came Robert Burgoyne. He was angry, for he had seen Gun's action, though he had not heard what provoked it.

"Steady, you mad fool!" he said. "What is this? Do you wish to deprive No. 4 of its market? Put down your hands; restore the stall instantly and make good the harm you have done."

Benjamin saluted and obeyed. He did not reply, but immediately set about repairing the havoc of Bolt's stall. Burgoyne flung Bolt a florin and went back to the Godolphins.

"Waal, we 'll see who 's gotten the mightiest arm another time," said Gun as he picked up the vegetables, and Charity Caunter helped him.

The matter ended until market was closed. Then Gun approached again, bade his sweetheart 'good-bye,' and pressed a tiny box made of wood and brass-headed nails into her hand. None saw the trifle pass or heard Gun's direction.

"Look inside!" he whispered; and then he turned to Bolt. "See here!" he said. "Shake and forget. We was both to blame. I 'm sorry I spoke rude and riled you. I know how 't is between you and me. But all 's fair in love and war — eh? It shall never be said I 've played off the straight."

He held out his hand; but Richard turned away.

"I 'll fight you first," he answered.

Gun shrugged his shoulders and watched the market

people depart, when a loud-mouthed bell announced that their business was ended. Then a sentry called to him and he hastened after the throng that slowly streamed into the jaws of Prison No. 4.

Elsewhere Miranda and her brother rode home together. He was enthusiastic concerning the Americans and envied Robert Burgoyne.

"That 's power!" he said. "I 'd be like that if I got the chance."

But he little guessed at the self-discipline and self-control that had helped to model the American. He was dazzled, for he had never until that day stood in the presence of a man who possessed the peculiarity of greatness.

CHAPTER IV

THE OLD SAW IS DISPROVED AND A MAN IS LUCKY IN LOVE AND LUCKY IN LIFE

THAT night Andy Midge, Placid Petersen, Benjamin Gun, Charley Miller and the rest of the mess of the *Vermont* killed time according to their habit; but an event of more than usual interest was afoot, and customary sports served only to pass the hour until the moment of an exciting trial.

In the dark corner, where they herded apart, Petersen read a smuggled journal, Johnny Wood played cards with Thomas Midge, and the other men proceeded down into the gloom of a *cul-de-sac* surrounded by granite walls.

"There was a new rat as big as a rabbit poked out his snout last night," said the black-nosed man. "He 'll come again, and I 'll back him for four mutton-bones — all I 've gotten."

"Done with you," answered Miller. "I 'll back Père Ratapon agin every blessed doodle of 'em."

They repaired to a dark corner, stuck a candle to the wall with a lump of clay, and scattered some fragments of broken meat in the midst of the stone-paved floor. Then the strangely-clad, ragged creatures took up their position in shadow and squatted down together on the pavement, like some forlorn and sequestered group of spirits from a scene of the Inferno. Owen Seapach, a born gambler, who had no longer the wherewithal to bet, played

umpire and took up his position by the wall behind a mass of stone; the rest sat silent and whispered among themselves till the sport should begin. In half an hour, the watcher held up his hand as a signal and pointed to the junction of wall and floor. Here were two holes, and now there peeped sharp snouts, first from one and then the other. Silence fell, and all eyes were fastened on the vermin as cautiously they crept, like grey shadows, into the ring of light. A venturesome young rat came first and then a larger one; then two others of medium size and lastly a monster, whose fur was blacker than his companions' and whose eyes glittered red. The creatures were all known and named, but this giant of rats had not been seen before.

"I 'll call him 'Goliath' and I 'm backing him," whispered Andy Midge. "What 's your money on, Ben?"

"Same as it always is: on 'George Washington,'" answered Gun.

The company of men watched the horde of rats, and laughed silently to see the new-comer drive the others before him here and there as he tasted the choicest pieces. Presently two more rats arrived, and with them another stranger.

"Say, boys," whispered Miller, "the game is getting known among 'em. They tell one another and hev bets on among themselves!"

Thrice the last stranger peeped and retired. It was a big rat, only a little smaller than 'Goliath,' but it proved very shy. At length the creature crept beside its comrades and began to feed. There was a sound of gnawing and squeaking and pattering.

"Now!" said Andy. "Start 'em, Ben." He signalled Scapach; whereon the old cook of the *Vermont*

made ready, and Gun brought his hands together with a sounding report. Like lightning the rats flashed away to the holes, and Seapach, jumping up, marked which first reached cover, and reported the result of the race.

"'Père Ratapon' first — won by a nose; then that new big fellow; then 'George Washington.' Rest all in a heap," he reported.

The stakes were paid to Miller, mostly in bones and buttons; and soon afterwards, returning to the light, the men found Robert Burgoyne awaiting them, and talking with Placid Petersen.

"'T is like this, boys," he said, "and I want one and all of you to understand clearly the nature of the thing we 're going to do. Then there 'll be no disappointment after. Johnny Wood, you go forrard there and keep watch. Don't fear — you shall have your draw when the time comes."

Johnny went on watch, and Burgoyne spoke again.

"Here we are — the last of the *Vermont's* crew — good friends and pards. And you 're working together in the new rectory house yonder, outside the prison walls. And Petersen here has found out that 't will be a very easy thing for one among you, helped by the rest, to make a clean escape, and get off in such a way that none can ever know the secret. The lucky chap will be safe and free. And as you all want to be that, you must draw lots who is to escape. Whoever is the man, the rest of you will be loyal and see him through. There 's seven of you, for poor Eben Taylor is going to make his escape another way. He 's dying: I 've just come from him."

The others murmured, to hear that their comrade's long fight with death would soon be ended.

"An unlucky man — always was," mused Petersen.

"'T is such as him make you know that luck is luck and that there is such a thing, deny it who may."

"Since Taylor 's booked, why should n't Placid have two draws — one for himself and one because the contrapsion was his?" asked Seapach. "And there 's you, too, Captain," he added. "You 've left yourself out."

Burgoyne shook his head.

"As for me, I stop here for the present. I could go if I wished to do so — on parole. But I 'm in office among the leaders as you know. There 's a chance of being useful yet."

"I don't want no second draw," declared Petersen. "'T would n't be fair."

"Then set about it, boys, and I 'll see fair play. Best to pull straws, six short and one long," directed Burgoyne.

"Here 's a bit of paper for spills," said Gun hurriedly. He brought out Charity's last letter and felt that if he could prevail with Burgoyne to use it, the result was assured. None appeared to realize the immense advantage Ben had planned for himself, and with a beating heart he tore up his treasure, fashioned thereof seven spills, and handed them to Burgoyne.

The question arose in what order they should draw; their names were therefore thrown into a red night-cap and pulled hap-hazard.

Charles Miller had first pull.

"Here 's for home and wife!" he said, and pulled a short spill. Owen Seapach followed him and also failed.

"Thank the Lordy you ain't got your marching orders," said Miller. "I should like to know what our mess would have done without you to cook for us."

"I war n't going, mate," answered the cook. "If I 'd drawn it, I 'd hev sold my chance to the highest bidder. Him as offered me a good thick coat agin the winter should 'hev had it."

Johnny Wood drew next, and his small hand shook so that he could hardly pull his spill.

"Steady, John!" said Burgoyne. The lad drew a short spill.

"Don't you wherrit. You 're young, you are; your turn will come," said Andy Midge. "You can very well afford to wait for peace, so long as the smallpox don't come your way."

But Johnny was not easily comforted or consoled for his disappointment. He pretended not to care, and sneaked out of sight to hide his tears.

Four spills remained, and Andy Midge was the next to draw.

"The Lord make it up to me for my black nose!" he said, and drew a short spill. He had been sanguine and was now much cast down. He swore, then held his breath and shared the general excitement, for only three spills remained.

"Placid Petersen," said Burgoyne, drawing the Dane's name from the night-cap.

"Good luck, Pete!" cried Miller. "'T was your invention, and I hope you 're going to be the man!"

But Petersen failed.

There remained only Thomas Midge and Gun, and the former offered to yield his draw to anybody who could make him a price. Miller and Andy Midge offered everything they had, which was little enough, but their scanty possessions did not tempt Thomas. In the event, however, it was well that no purchase of the chance had

taken place, for Gun's name came next from the cap; he put out his hand and drew the long spill.

Burgoyne congratulated him.

"Good luck, Ben! Next Monday 's the day, and you can trust your mess-mates to do the right thing."

"Well I know that — the whole boiling on you," answered Gun, "and I wish that we could all skedaddle together. But I 'm the chap seemingly, though maybe, seeing what a darnation lot of me there is to hide, 't would have been better if the lot had fallen to one of you little men."

"'T is as it should be, Ben," declared Placid Petersen, "for you 've gotten friends outside the prison, and we have not."

Burgoyne left them then, and soon afterwards there came the toll of a bell. The time for retiring had arrived; the lights were extinguished; the crowds ascended to their sleeping chambers. Within an hour great silence fell, save where sufferers tossed sleepless, or sad dreamers cried in their slumber. For a time the tribulation and misery, the hopes and fears of that mighty concourse faded under the blessed anodyne of slumber. 'Père Ratapon,' 'Goliath,' and their friends peeped forth again to finish their interrupted meal; and ever through the silence, like a whisper, now near now far, went the shuffling feet of sentries, who trod the outer walls, or kept their beats about the iron doors.

Benjamin Gun slept not, however, for his thoughts were far too full of splendour and excitement. He itched to let Charity hear the news, and remembered with dismay that two days must pass before prison market came again.

She would help him and hide him; and then, when

peace was come, together they would return to America. But that part of the prospect did not long arrest Benjamin's thoughts. An orphan, and with no near relations to draw him home, he cared little whether he returned or stayed. He was, however, familiar with Farmer Caunter's views on the war, and doubted not that in the end he would fly with Cherry back to his own country. Sailor-like, he had not thought upon details. No doubt they would set off in a cartel ship together some day; and for the rest, he well knew that Burgoyne meant to support or employ the survivors of the *Vermont*.

CHAPTER V

IN WHICH A MAIDEN'S HEART BEATS HIGH

FARMER JACKO CAUNTER, of Bair Down, took black views of the time, and his wife, Mary, found herself powerless to modify them. But Cherry, being full of the joy of youth and moving in a little secret summer of love, could not echo her parent's gloom.

"Look at it!" he said, with his eyes on the peat fire and his pipe in the corner of his mouth. "Look at what life be coming to! This here cussed war 's eating the country alive; our best have fallen afore the French, and all that be left face the Yankees and go down like corn under the sickle. The Parliament men be all fighting against each other, and if I had my way they should march to war themselves and taste what they drive their betters into. And Dartymoor 's going to the dogs. And buying prices never was so high and selling prices never was so low. And the country over-run with rogues and vagabonds so that an honest man 's hardly safe in daylight, let alone after dark. And them far-famed nighthawks, Blackadder and Workman, loose in our midst 't is said. And the War Prison full of dangerous cut-throats; as may burst forth like a flood and murder us in our beds at any moment. And no peace or security anywhere. Be gormed if life 's worth living nowadays! If it was n't for all my hard-earned savings, I 'd welcome the end of the world.".

"Us ought to save against the next world, not this," sighed Mrs. Caunter. "'T is a terrible state of life, without a doubt; but the ill wind have blown good to us in Dartymoor — you can't deny that, master — for the prison markets have put many a pound in your pocket."

"And ban't that gall to a man like me? Do 'e think I like taking their money? I 'd rather take any man's afore theirs. And so, like as not, the cunning sarpents will all break loose some fine day and murder us and get it back again. I won't hear no good about 'em, wife — not even from you — for they be traitors all — sons at their mother's throat."

"You 're so bad as General Sir Archer Godolphin," she said. "'T is even so he rails against 'em."

"They 've got their side, all the same; and they 've got their proper pride as a free, fighting nation should have; and 't is well known they had to fight us for their honour," said Charity, looking up from her sewing.

Her father roared, and his clay pipe fell out of his mouth and broke upon the hearth.

"You, a daughter of mine, to tell that treason! They 've not got a side, and they 're not a free people, and — and — prisoners of war be too good a name for 'em; and if you face me with them lies again, Charity Caunter, you 'll rue it to your dying day!"

The farmer raved, and his wife tried vainly to calm him.

"Us 'll leave these high matters, master. No doubt war be a cruel, pitiful, silly sort of thing for creatures with immortal souls in 'em, and I 'm sure to see all them fine, hungry, ragged men under lock and key be a sorry sight for us women who tend the market. And our own flesh

and blood be rotting in their prisons just the same. And as for these brave sailors up to Prince Town, you can't blame them. They had to do as they was bid and fight against England — and very well they 've done it, seemingly."

"Tell not me," he cried. "If they 'd been honest, they 'd not have falled in with their masters' knavish plans or gone in their ships. And if they do starve and fall like flies under prison evil and freeze to death in their hammocks of a night, 't is no more than the anger of the Lord against the men who fired a gun against England. The French I forgive. They be monkeys — born without souls — and why there are such people on the face of the earth is the Almighty's business, and we shall know His reason in His own time."

Jacko Caunter gesticulated, frowned, scowled, lifted and lowered his black eye-brows, and behaved very much like a monkey himself during this tirade. His women could not pacify him. He rose presently, strode up and down the kitchen, and growled again.

"But they Americans! Flesh of our flesh — to see them bite the hand that fed them — 't is a very vile sight for an honest and loyal man. And as for you, Cherry, I 'd sooner far have you lying in your coffin than friends with one of them. Remember that! And if I thought you took their side, or had ever, by nod or look or deed, encouraged one of 'em, I 'd drive you from my threshold and disown you evermore."

Mrs. Caunter shivered, and put up her hands in a beseeching fashion, but her daughter only tossed her head. She knew her father very well, and believed his bark to be worse than his bite.

"I don't take no side," she answered. "I 'm like Mr.

Trueman Trinny to the *Ring o' Bells* — fair and equal-minded I hope. I want England to win, and the sooner the better, so that all those good, harmless, brave men up along at the prison can get home to their wives and children and sweethearts — as be crying out bitterly for 'em. That 's not taking sides — 't is only plain Christianity, and you ought to feel the same, father."

"Traitors!" he muttered again, then turned to another grievance. "And as for the law — be gormed if I know what the law be coming to — coming to naught, seemingly. 'T is gone so weak now that any rogue can make a living at cutting purses. To think at this time of day, in the midst of a God-fearing land, that a highwayman like Blackadder can gang his gait at will and pistol here and rob there, and the whole nation powerless against him."

"Dropped in at Merripit, I hear," said Mrs. Caunter. "A big, blue-chinned man, talkative and quite civil, so long as he ban't crossed. Never in rude haste and never coarse in his language. He took Mrs. Ford's cannelsticks and watch and chain and her far-famed silver caudle bowl. Then he had a drink of cider and praised the open weather and told her as Dartymoor had cured an obstinate tissick on his chest, and said he was terrible sorry to miss her husband but hoped for better luck next time — the sauce-box!"

"Well knowing thaf Farmer Ford was to Tavistock. God send the hemp be spun to weave that knave's last necktie!" said Jacko devoutly.

"And there was the other along with him — the chap that 's called Workman," added Charity. "Us heard all about it at prison market from Mrs. Crymes of Hartland. They fell upon Merripit in broad day, and Blackadder

called the man with him 'William.' On horses they came, and they wore black masks, and galloped off very fast after they 'd took the things. And Mrs. Ford told Mrs. Crymes that her legs shook under her, and she went goose-flesh down the spine and thought herself in a night-mare. At their belts was the very pistols what must have shot that poor guard off the Okehampton coach a fort-night since."

"'T is strange their secret friends don't peach and give 'em up," said Mr. Caunter. "There 's good money offered for their capture."

Mrs. Caunter sighed.

"I hope as they 'll never cast their eyes this way," she said, "for 't will be terrible poor speed if you lose your nest-egg, master — and I wish to God you 'd take it to Tavistock Bank, like other men do."

"Not me! Trust a bank! Trust a lawyer! Trust the devil! They be welcome to my savings — when they can get their claws on 'em! I wish they 'd come. I 'm itching to pin the rogues to my barn door with a pitch-fork. They 'd find me a nut too tough to crack, I 'll wager!"

"They 'll wait till you be out of the way, father," an-swered Charity. "They be cruel clever, and never make no fuss nor hurt anybody, unless folk show fight. But there 's Dartmoor men helping 'em under the rose, no doubt."

"And women, too," said Mrs. Caunter.

The truculent farmer swore, and desired no better fate than to lay by the heels Blackadder of dark fame. Jacko Caunter was of Celtic blood — a brown-eyed, hatchet-faced man — honest, vain, pig-headed, and ignorant. His Saxon wife had steered him for five-and-twenty years

through the ways of peace; but he knew nothing of her skill and tact in the process, and, indeed, held her rather a stupid woman. Their daughter resembled her father in a certain imperious and dominating force of character; but she had intellect. They were too much alike to be very close friends, for Cherry's wits revealed her father's failings and her mother's skill. Thus far she had managed the farmer cleverly, but now there loomed ahead the battle of her life and a problem from which a woman less courageous and determined might well have shrunk.

The time was near when her father must know her secret — a secret that could only spell profound disaster for her when he did know it. Yes, the time was near — far nearer than she knew. Indeed, within four-and-twenty hours Charity heard of the drawing of the spills and learned that Benjamin Gun would be a free man in a week.

She rose now to retire, but her father had another matter for her ear. He bade her fetch his jar of hollands, then touched a familiar and a painful theme.

"Came over the hill with Dick Bolt this forenoon," he said. "It passes the wit of man that a sensible creature like you, Cherry, can't see that fine chap as others see him. You 'd say I was n't one like to be easily suited in a son-in-law, and no more I be; but Richard is all I want, and if I 'm satisfied, 't is a terrible curious thing you ban't. Who 's like to know best — a green girl such as you, or a wise, far-seeing man like me? I understand the young chap inside out and I have n't a fault to find in him. He 's straight and shrewd and prosperous, and does right and hates wrong and stands well with the gentry. And the maiden that thinks to get a finer

husband than him, wants better bread than be made of wheat, in my opinion. Eh, mother?"

"A very proper man, but ——"

"I 'll take no 'buts.' Find a properer — find a properer. The daps of me at his age. I see myself again in him."

"I don't love Richard, father," declared the girl quietly.

"Then why the devil don't you?" he snapped out. "When I was young, the girls did what they were told and loved where they were told and knew full well that their parents was wiser than them in everything; but now — each chit thinks she has enough wit to run her own life and choose her own husband and lecture her own parents. What 's the world coming to?"

"Nay, master — love's love," said his wife; "and if you 've forgot it now, none knowed it better 'n you five-and-twenty years agone. Who was it fetched me off on a moonshiny night from my home and sat me pillion and rode away with me under the noses of my father and two sojer uncles? Who was it ought to have wed fat Milly Bassett of Moreton — to please his dear father; but rather chose to take thin Molly Chave of Postbridge — to please his dear self? Love be love, my old man, even though you 've growed out of it, and I 'm with our Cherry there — she shan't take none she don't love, not if I can prevent it."

"Cats!" he said; "you 'm all cats together, and instead of purring to us poor men, like you did use to do, 't is all claws nowadays. Women are not what they used to be. They be like the weather and everything else — growing worse. Now you 'd best get to bed — the pair of you — for 't is prison market to-morrow

and some heavier baskets to carry than usual, by the look of it."

They left him, and next day were early astir. Richard Bolt did not go to market on this occasion, having business elsewhere; therefore Charity had to carry the baskets alone; but her mother was with her, for Mrs. Caunter often accompanied her daughter to the stall. A load more precious than butter or eggs, poultry or vegetables, went with Charity concealed in her bosom, for Miranda had met her by appointment two days before and entrusted a letter.

"Your lover sees one Mr. Burgoyne daily," she explained, "and should the chance offer, Cherry, you must hand to Mr. Gun this note for his master. It concerns a book."

But Miranda turned rosy under the other girl's searching eyes.

"Trust me, dear miss — he shall have it safe enough," she promised. "And if — if perchance Ben has a letter for you ——?"

"There will be none — there will be none, Cherry," vowed Miranda; and then she had ridden swiftly away in no little trepidation. But her own letter was safe and, for the present, travelling very comfortably and very close to Charity's heart.

She chose this occasion to tell her mother the truth.

"You understand," she said. "You're a woman, mother, and the sensiblest, dearest mother as ever breathed, and you'll not say nor think any cruel thing when I tell you I be tokened to — to one of these fine fellows up-along."

Mrs. Caunter nodded.

"I know. You young folk think us old ones be deaf

and blind, but I know all about it. Have n't I stood behind the stall at your elbow a score of times and seen the man help you to put away the trestles and all the rest of it? And have n't I marked the way he treats me — an ugly old woman? You think you love that giant, Benjamin Gun; and he thinks you love him, and I ban't going to quarrel with either of you about it — too wise for that. But don't you build no castles in the air, Cherry. And remember that a sailor 's a sailor. They be very well used to change in all things, and come the poor fellow gets his liberty and a passage home in one of they cartel ships, he 'll take it quick enough and think no more of your red cheeks than he will of your red appies."

"Don't say that," the girl answered. "Bide a bit till you see him closer and look in his honest eyes. He 's a hero among 'em, I tell you, and that mighty man, Master Burgoyne, thinks great things of him. Benjamin was born to farming, mother, though he went for a sailor when Mr. Burgoyne fitted his privateer. But a farmer he is for choice, and from Vermont State he comes, and he be the only man amongst 'em that can look at Dartymoor without hating it — because of me. And he don't want particular to take me home along with him. All his folk be dead, and he 'd just so soon bide along wi' us to Bair Down."

Mrs. Caunter laughed.

"No doubt; and be father's right hand! A likely story, my dear. Such things don't happen. Do 'e forget what the master said last night? This be parlous news you tell me, and I hope, for all our sakes, that you and him will change your minds, for a madder notion never got in the heads of a silly maid and man."

"You 're on our side all the same, mother," answered the girl. "I know right well you are."

So the matter was left, and Cherry went on her way without much self-consciousness but in the large hope and trust of youth. She had waded deep in love and reached that depth where absorbing passion made her oblivious to the outer world and all in it. Her life's future centered in the American. He was sole guiding-star in her sky; and now that star proved much in the ascendant, as she soon learned.

Benjamin Gun shouldered lesser men away from the Caunters' stall presently, when he and his mates returned from their business of stone-mason outside the prison, and a moment came when the lovers were able to get a few words together. He gave her a letter — in a quid of tobacco which was supposed to be a present for her mother! — and she handed him two apples, each of which contained a precious core. One was for himself, the other had the letter 'B' scraped on the red rind and his sweetheart made it clear that it was sent for Ben's master.

Thus their *billets doux* passed between them and none suspected. Mr. Gun unblushingly assured the turnkeys that he could not write, but he wronged himself. The sailor's caligraphy was better than his spelling; though he had a mariner's plainness of speech, and Charity was never in doubt as to his meaning. To-day much matter filled his note, and under his breath he warned her to be unusually careful and read the missive in secret.

Anon others began to crowd about the stall, and Gun, as usual, was the butt for his friends' humour.

"When his majesty here shuts one eye and lets in a

noggin of brandy to No. 4 we 'll drink to the health of the lovers," said Andy Midge. He pointed to a turnkey, who answered with a wink. Plenty of spirits and other interdicted materials were smuggled to the prisoners; for not a few of the Americans possessed wealth and enjoyed the receipt of pretty regular supplies of money. They had, however, to pay dearly for their luxuries. Charity brought a sucking-pig for sale to-day, and it fetched three shillings.

The conversation was of a small man who had escaped to Dartmouth and so got to sea and reached France.

"'T is said a girl helped him with a gown," declared Charley Miller. "Now surely, Miss Caunter, you might do the like for long Ben here. He 'd look quite the gentlewoman, I 'm sure."

"Only don't let him whistle 'Yankee Doodle,' like that fool, Burnham," said Seapach. "If he 'd only kept quiet, he 'd hev gotten clear off in the sentry's coat and hat he stole; but just to show how derned cool he was, he must needs whistle, and a guard challenged and the silly chap was done for. He 's cooling his tail in the cachot of No. 5 now."

"A clever chap, too," asserted Andy. "'T was him made that dummy we lowered out of window t' other night. It looked for all the world like a man trying to escape, and the lobsters let fly at it and, when we dropped the rope, rushed in on it as valiant as lions. How we laughed up aloft when they found it was a man of straw! And it got up their dander proper. The Commandant was just mad!"

"They 're a cowardly lot at heart — the soldiers," said Thomas Midge. "If No. 4 could only act in concert with t' other prisoners, we 'd hev every blessed doodle

of us out and the place in our hands easy as falling off a log."

But Benjamin Gun shook his head.

"A foolish thought, Tom. You heard what the boss said last night — Cap'n Burgoyne, I mean. We shall all be free men inside three months — and then ——"

"Very easy for you to preach, Ben," cried the boy, Johnny Wood. Then he sank his voice. "You 'll be free in three nights, wi' luck!"

"'T is true what Ben says all the same," declared Seapach. "The sloop of war, *Favourite*, is half-way to the States wi' the treaty of peace by now."

"And these cussed rogues won't even let us rejoice at that," grumbled Andy Midge. "When they hung out that flag over the 'Commodore,'[1] with '*Free Trade and Sailors' Rights*' on it, did n't Commandant Short and his dirty troops go and force 'em to pull it down again? And the bombs we fired made all the country-side shake in its shoes!"

"They ain't got the pluck of powder-monkeys," said Johnny.

"'T is idle to fly in the face of the powers any more now, however," urged Gun, "and I don't say it because I may be a free man afore long. I say it because I believe it. The last chance of a general escape were lost when 'Judas' Bagley split and gave away the underground passage."

The others cursed.

"And may he split again, like t' other Judas, and his bowels fall out!" prayed Charles Miller.

Elsewhere Mrs. Caunter spoke with the man called Placid Petersen.

[1] Prison No. 3 was called "The Commodore."

"And how be poor Mr. Eben Taylor faring?" she asked.

"Well, I hope: he 's dead. A good chap caught up into the war, and he never could exactly tell how he came to be fighting. He escaped with the rest of us by the skin of his teeth and did wonders and played the hero. Then his fate overtakes him in this den. However, 't is no odds any more. He 's free — and we go on hoping. There 's talk of more exchanges in the air. 'T is time; look at our shoes! I blush for your country when I look at 'em — and our jackets likewise."

"Was Dr. Magrath along with Mr. Taylor when he died?" asked Mrs. Caunter, and Petersen said that he was.

"An angel in human shape, that man. Derned if I can understand where he hides his wings. A true friend to the prisoners — a heart he hath to feel for us, and his voice is better than his physic. God will reward him."

The market ended ere long and a great bell clanged the folk away. The boards and trestles were put up; the gates were opened, and the people with light baskets trailed off to their distant homes.

Miss Caunter and her mother walked together, but the girl's impatience could not long be restrained. Half a mile away from the prison confines, she dropped her baskets, sat upon a stone, and read Benjamin's letter. It made her heart beat indeed, and soon she ran after Mary Caunter with the great news. Her war-worn sailor had drawn the lot and was to escape; and to her fell the task of helping him. Much indeed depended upon her; he looked to her to aid him; he trusted her pluck and her power to do so.

"Mother! Mother!" cried Cherry. "List to this! Ben have drawn the lot — 't was my letter torn up in spills brought the luck to him! And 't is all set out in his precious letter — what I 'm to do and how I 'm to help. Liberty be the very breath in Ben's nostrils, you must know, mother dear, and 't is my proud work to help. On Monday 't will be!"

Her face flamed with pride, as she thought that her lover had come to her at this great crisis in his fortunes. She could talk of naught else. She lived in the romance and adventure of the moment; nor would she listen when her grave-eyed mother spoke of the future.

"We 'll hide him away snug when he be fetched safely off," said Cherry. "'T will be my fine part to feed him and tend him in secret. And come presently, when the war be ended and Ben 's a free man again, he 'll have to face father and fight it out for me — and trust him to win!"

"Lord! the hopefulness of the young!" sighed Mrs. Caunter. "Their hope and their power o' faith in to-morrow! If you 'd seen so many to-morrows as what I have, child, you would n't be so ready to believe in 'em. And in the case of you and this great madman — there, 't is more 'n I can think of and keep my thought in bounds. 'T is a black come-along-of-it, whichever way you look."

"'T is a glorious come-along-of-it!" cried Cherry. "He 'll conquer father like he conquers the soldiers and turnkeys. He 's all men's friend!"

Her thoughts turned back to her letter and its strange directions. In her mind grew and grew a symbol, a figure, a vital design whereupon literally the fate of Benjamin Gun might be expected to turn.

It was represented thus —

"A star between two stripes," breathed Charity to herself. "The star to guide me to my Ben!"

CHAPTER VI

INTRODUCING THE WORST MAN IN DARTMOOR — AND THE BEST

THE Reverend Septimus Godolphin and his niece walked together from Prince Hall to Prince Town. They crossed Dart, breasted the great hills, passed Tor Royal, and thence climbed upward to the newly created village. Sir Archer's brother took active interest in the vicarage and church that grew under the hands of the prisoners, and the church, now very nearly completed, was his goal on this occasion. To her joy, he had asked Miranda to accompany him; but he was innocent of any subterfuge, nor guessed how much the unexpected occasion meant to her.

But well she knew that Robert Burgoyne was working in the roof of the sacred building; that he carved the ends of the roof beams and helped to embellish the house that others had built. Her uncle, in all innocence, had invited her to accompany him into the presence of the man who filled her thoughts; and he solved a problem, too, for Miranda had written a letter in answer to one from Burgoyne which duly reached her; but the girl's difficulty was to convey it. She knew that Charity would take it safely; yet at this stage of her romance she was timid, suspicious, and full of doubt. She liked not the thought of letting Cherry know more, and hesitated to entrust another communication to any hand.

Then came this complete solution of the difficulty, and with joy Miranda perceived that she herself might carry the letter to him without anybody else being the wiser.

To the church they came, and her heart leapt to her throat to see a man in the lofty roof jump from a beam to a ladder and come swiftly, sailor fashion, to earth as she and her uncle entered. He was beside them in a moment and contrived ere long to separate them. For Mr. Godolphin wished to inspect certain work in the east end and was dispatched at once with a guide to do so, while Miranda stood for a few moments beside Burgoyne, heard him speak, looked into his fearless eyes, and rejoiced secretly that he was so very glad to see her again.

"This is indeed an honour and a joy little looked for," he said. "For a moment I feared that all was not well with you; but since all is very well, then may I hope with good ground that you received my letter and found it not amiss?"

"Of course not! I was very proud to get such a letter from you," she said shyly.

"The pride belonged to me when I wrote; but it had a fall, as pride will. No matter for that. May I be so bold as to hope you 'll accept the book that tells you all about my state — Vermont, the beautiful and happy — and the paper along with it? For I am vain of my ancestors. Their lives make good reading."

"I shall read with great joy," she said. "And I liked your letter too," she added. "It was good of you to think on a girl."

He looked at her without making any answer. A compliment leapt to his lips, but its triviality made him prefer silence.

"I thought twice whether your interest might not be sprung of simple kindness," he answered, "for here small things bulk large and life has grown distorted. But I promised the book and therefore found the first opportunity to send it."

"I — I have made bold to write and thank you," she answered. "You said that you despised not the poets, as most men of action would seem to do. Shall I leave these verses — or was that said, maybe, to please me?"

His face lighted with mighty pleasure.

"I had rather have your book than liberty!" he said, and took it eagerly, almost reverently, from her hand. "Henceforth, Mistress Godolphin," he continued, "there shall be no doubt of meanings between us. I shall believe you; you must believe me. I am a sailor-man — plain-spoken folk, as you know. And you are a soldier's daughter — and ——" He broke off, for Mr. Godolphin returned to his niece.

"I rejoice, Master Burgoyne — I rejoice," he said, beaming upon the young people.

"That we are so nearly finished, sir?"

"Even so. The dedication of this sacred building need be no longer delayed. I shall communicate with his Grace, the Bishop of Exeter, immediately. I long to hear the first hymn of praise ascend within these walls."

"And the first prayer to hasten the peace," murmured Miranda.

"Well spoken, well spoken!" answered her uncle.

To the trouble of the young man and maid, Mr. Godolphin would not go away again; yet neither could blame him, though a look of understanding passed between them and Burgoyne marked the little frown that Miranda

Page 65

"Miranda stood for a few moments by the Barranca"

made and was well pleased to see it. But she was an imperious lady and could do pretty much what she chose with her reverend uncle. She bade him now procure certain measurements and see that they were accurate.

"You know that I have promised you to make a fair cloth for the holy table," said she. "I prithee, dear uncle, find from yonder men what I want to know. I have the linen and only need the length and breadth to set about my embroideries."

"I am happy to think you have borne the matter in mind," he replied, and departed immediately.

Thus time served for a few more words to pass between them; yet neither said much more. They seemed stricken dumb. The magic bolt had flown: they loved, looked in each other's eyes, confirmed the thing they felt, and marvelled in secret.

She asked whether Vermont were a wild country, and the question loosened young Burgoyne's tongue. He became animated.

"The loveliest land in the world," he said. "Both a wild and a beautiful land, yet maybe you would not think well of it if these great moors are very precious to you?"

"I should like the sport," she declared, and then asked a question.

"Is the famous beaver a Vermont creature?"

He assured her that the rivers of his state were full of beavers, and began to relate their natural history and amazing social arrangements. At that time travellers' tales were told about the beavers and they were credited with powers more remarkable than they possessed. In all good faith the young sailor repeated these wonders,

and Miranda was laughing with pleasure and surprise when her uncle returned.

"You will tell her next of 'the anthropophagi, of men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders'!" he said. "And right soon I trust you may have full opportunity to do so. To my old but sanguine eyes Peace is already brooding over the nations and waiting, like Noah's dove, for a place where she might alight. Let us pray that the flood of war will soon recede, and Peace once more find foothold on the earth."

They examined Robert Burgoyne's carving, and Miranda praised it, then, with more promises of books and letters, she departed beside Septimus Godolphin. But her thoughts were far from his words as they tramped away together over the wild land. In her ears was another voice, deep and tuneful. She retraced its utterances and now held her breath at recollection of the things the prisoner of war had told her, and now laughed at memories of his humorous anecdotes. Meantime, the clergyman, taking his usual charitable survey of suffering mankind, spoke of the goodness underlying human nature and declared that not the least worthy or the hardest hearted of men wholly lacked it.

"Goodness is the divine attribute that we, God's creatures, universally share," said he. "In quantity greater or smaller, in quality richer or poorer, the virtue belongs to one and all of us. Did we set out to seek a man wholly bad, we should seek in vain, Miranda, and history, albeit its pages are darkened by the doings of many a powerful fire-brand, yet shows us no notorious persons who were all fiend, though their enemies have sought to make the world believe so. The human heart —good powers! What men are these?"

They were passing over a deep tract of lonely heath shut in by granite hills when suddenly, magically, as though sprung by miracle from the shades of night, two horsemen confronted them. One rode a large bay; the other was seated on a black horse. One was tall; the other appeared to be of less than average height. Both wore the familiar uniform of the road and both were masked.

Miranda lifted her eyes at her uncle's sudden exclamation, and brought back her thoughts from their wanderings by the streams of another land. Then she answered Mr. Godolphin's question.

"They 're the highwaymen!" she said.

"Without a doubt — these birds of prey that have frighted Dartmoor so cruelly of late!"

No fear appeared on the face of the old man or the girl. Miranda exhibited fluttered interest, and her uncle was sad. A moment later the riders trotted up; both took off their hats, and the taller spoke.

"We are sorry, reverend sir, to spoil your walk, and pray that neither you nor this young lady will be frighted. The polite and courteous find us as considerate as themselves. We live on the superabundance of the prosperous; we are generous to the poor; we seek to restore a little of that balance of wealth which of late has grown so unequal. You will help us gladly, if I mistake not, for it belongs to your high calling so to do."

"These men are Blackadder and Workman, Uncle Septimus," said Miranda, looking fearlessly up at their hidden faces.

"And so we are. The lovely lady tells truth, Uncle Septimus," said the smaller rascal, mimicking her voice. His hair was fair, and from his mask shone laughing eyes;

but the larger man had black hair and a blue heavy jowl. He spoke in a slow, cultured voice.

The clergyman regarded them with frank sorrow.

"You are still young men," he said. "My heart is sad for you. Were it not that your hands are already dyed in the blood of your fellow-creatures, one might urge you yet to a properer course of life."

But Miranda took a different view.

"You are cowards!" she said. "To stop an old mar and a girl — the great Blackadder and famous Will Workman to do that! An eagle does not catch flies."

"Ah! a clever maiden, I see, and learned in the classics," declared Blackadder. "I, too, am a scholar. My father was also a clergyman. It may interest you to know that I am descended from Irish kings."

The Reverend Septimus looked mildly at him.

"Alas! you have indeed descended!" he said.

"Belike you were driven out of Ireland with the other snakes by good St. Patrick?" suggested Miranda, and the lesser highwayman roared with laughter at his chief. But Blackadder did not laugh.

"Come!" he answered. "The night thickens; we must not keep you, else you may lose your way home in the bogs."

"Your money or your life!" cried Miranda. "Those are the words, are they not? Let us hear you say them, Mr. Blackadder. 'T will make the tale prettier in the telling."

"Out on you, pert minx!" he replied. "Come, deliver! My friend and I have far to go ere midnight."

"I would we had Robert Burgoyne with us," said the clergyman. "For such is his prowess that I think, despite the blood of kings, he might best these rogues."

"And who is Master Burgoyne of the high hand?" inquired the merry highwayman.

"An American, young man. A notable sailor pent up yonder till peace shall come."

"I 'm a true-born Englishman, Uncle Septimus, and good for any ten of the boys of the Stars and the Stripes."

"You braggart!" retorted Miranda. "Would he were but here! The stars you 'd see and the stripes you 'd feel, you naughty rogue!"

"Think not I have any quarrel with the fine fellows," answered Workman. "I 'd loose them to-morrow had I the power. Shadrach here and I have given it a thought, I assure you. I was a sailor myself once. Began life at a rope's end, you may say."

"Ah! and will end it so!" she answered.

"A bitter tongue, mistress. But I 'd sooner dance with you than the hangman's daughter. We 'll live in hope. Meantime ——"

"Stand and deliver!" said the bigger man. "Something too much of this."

Septimus Godolphin regarded him benevolently. "Your luck is out, Shadrach Blackadder," he answered. "'T is a name that recalls a burning and a fiery furnace, Shadrach. With such a name one might have hoped — However, we have nothing about us. My niece here is plainly and poorly clad for walking. I think she carries not a jewel. For my part, my watch and seals and the buckles on my shoes are all that I have about me of value — save this book of religious precepts under my arm."

"I carry my grandmother's ring," said Miranda. "'T is only the agate one, by good chance, not the sapphire and diamonds."

She took it from her finger and held it up to Workman, but he refused it.

"You are one on whom Fortune smiles, and may she do so for ever," he said. "This you can have again for ——" He was going to say "a kiss," but the girl's proud bearing and scornful eyes restrained him. Moreover, he well knew that Blackadder liked not such weakness. "For nothing," he concluded, and Miranda took her ring again, but did not thank him.

Blackadder had turned his attention to the clergyman.

"Your watch and seals then; and the buckles from your shoes," he said.

"My watch and seals I surrender since I must," answered the old man, "but I do not kneel to remove my buckles. That work you can do for yourself."

He stood upright, patient and dignified.

"What are they made of?" inquired the highwaymen.

"Of silver," was the answer.

"Fool! Had you said they were trash, I should have let you keep them."

"Had I said they were trash, I should have lied, my poor fellow. Come, you who are a descendant of Irish kings — or Irish Kerns — Shakespeare's 'shag-eared Kerns,' I suspect — descend now from that fine horse and steal an old man's shoe-buckles!"

Blackadder grunted.

"Damn your airs and graces. 'T is no time for them," he said. Then he got off his steed, giving the rein to Workman, while Miranda stroked the horse's nose and asked its name. On foot Blackadder proved a tall, lean creature but evidently one possessed of great physical strength. He worked with swiftness, cast one glance at close quarters over Miranda, then turned to her

uncle, bent down, and removed his buckles in a moment.

"You carry no purse?" he asked.

"None," answered the clergyman.

Then Blackadder remounted his horse.

"Would that we might finish the rite with a prayer, reverend sir," gibed Workman, "but alas! time is wanting."

"You will have eternity to pray in, young man," answered the other, "and plenty of occasion."

"May the gaol chaplain who shrives me be such another as you, Uncle Septimus!" Blackadder had already ridden away, and since his chief's back was turned Mr. Workman kissed his hand and pressed it on his heart for Miranda's benefit. Then he, too, departed, and the Moor, that had so suddenly produced the rascals, swallowed them again as swiftly.

Uncle Septimus, who had borne himself with courage before danger, now collapsed.

"I am a little troubled at the heart," he said. "The ancient weakness against which the doctors warned me. 'T is nothing, but I must recline a moment."

He sat down and closed his eyes, while Miranda, knowing that her uncle's heart was not strong, felt acute concern for him.

"The wretches, the cowardly, jeering wretches!" she cried. "If I had but been a man . . ." Then she turned to her uncle.

"'T is not above a mile to Trueman Trinny's," said she. "Let me take your arm and we will walk slowly to the *Ring o' Bells*. There you shall get a mount and come easily home."

"An excellent idea — worthy of your quick wits," he answered; and with his niece's help was soon moving

again. They passed a river, at a ford some distance beneath Tor Royal, and presently reached Two Bridges, where stood a famous hostelry and dwelt a famous man.

Trueman Trinny of the *Ring o' Bells* enjoyed a measure of fame that extended far beyond the fringes of Dartmoor, while upon it he reigned paramount in all branches of moorland craft — farming, stock-raising, hunting, and sport in general. His genial company and far-reaching knowledge were denied to none, and whether behind his bar or at a pony 'drift,' or with hounds, or gun in hand after a snipe or black cock, the man's humour and wisdom appeared. He had a nerve of iron and was never known to be at a loss for word or deed. Now, at sight of a drooping old figure and an upright young one, Mr. Trinny, who chanced to be at his outer door, ran forward, for at a glance he perceived that there was something wrong.

The innkeeper was a man of fifty, with keen eyes wherein homed eternal humour. It was his great gift to see through appearance to reality; and reality he found, like Democritus before him, a matter for tolerant amusement rather than wringing of hands. His face was round and full, and supported by an ample double chin; his short hair was grey and stood brusquely off his square forehead. Upon his temples ran lines like little rays of light from his keen eyes. He had a firm but kindly mouth, ever ready to laugh, and his expression combined an alert subtle observation with a twinkling and tender regard for all things human. He was clad in a plum-coloured coat, and wore cord breeches and a three-cornered hat. Now Miranda called to him and he obeyed her direction instantly without wasting words.

"My Uncle Septimus is ill, Mr. Trinny. I beg you will

get him something to drink as swiftly as ... be. Some brandy, it had better be."

Trueman vanished, and so quickly did he act that the clergyman was still twenty yards from the inn when he returned. He hastened to him and presented a glass on a salver.

"Add a little water, my friend," said Mr. Godolphin, "and let me sit before your porch awhile. My niece will tell you the occasion of this disorder."

Trinny led the old man to a chair.

"I doubt your reverence has walked too far," he said. "You shall have a nag saddled so soon as you are rested."

"Too far for our comfort, indeed. In a word, we have fallen among thieves — those ill-omened birds, Blackadder and Workman."

"They took my uncle's watch and shoe-buckles," explained Miranda. "They knew not, nor did he let them see, that he was ill, but when the bullies had ridden away, poor Uncle Septimus felt his heart beat strangely, for it is not strong."

"A blight on the rogues!" cried Trinny. "Which way did they go, and how long is it since they made off?"

"Restrain your ardour," answered the clergyman. "Well I know you would like no better task than to be after them; but your cattle could not overtake the bay and the black these bad men ride."

"Rabbit the rascals! They strike like the bolt from the blue," exclaimed Trinny. "'Tis their clever trick, like the hawks they are, to swoop where least expected. Jan French here heard tell but yesterday that they were to the north and had stopped a coach nigh Launceston. But we'll have 'em by the heels yet, your honour.

They 've had rope enough, and may it be a Devonshire man who accounts for 'em!"

An osler appeared at this moment — grizzly, clean-shaven, and rather grim. He was sturdy and thick-set, with straight grey eyes that looked out from beneath a thatch of wild eye-brow.

"Jan," said Trinny, "you 're out for once. Here 's his reverence and Miss Godolphin have met the robbers. They 're about again. Dartmoor has n't seen the last of 'em yet."

"Then let me get on my pony and find the anointed rips!" cried Jan French. "God's light! how much longer be we to tremble at the damned dogs?"

"Look to your words afore his reverence, Jan. His reverence hath lost his shoe-buckles, yet keeps the rein on his tongue. Best you saddle the pony, however — not to run a wild-goose chase after Blackadder and Workman, but that Mr. Godolphin may get him home at his ease."

Trinny insisted on Miranda drinking a cordial, and presently, with a retinue of three men and a boy, she and her uncle departed for Prince Hall.

When they had gone the publican spoke to his wife.

"'T is well it was no worse, Amelia Ann," he said. "And I hope the old gentleman will take no hurt from this. I felt his pulse, and found it beating strong afore he rode away. But we must keep awake if that pair of weasels are about again. They 'll have a try at Jacko Caunter or me as sure as death afore they go: and 't is more like him than me, for he brags about his money, and likes the people to know he 's got savings."

Mr. Trinny lifted his eyes above a wood, that rolled upward from the river before him. It ascended thick

and darkling through the dusk above a stream, and beyond it, perched on the lofty hill of Bair Down, gleamed a red light from the kitchen window of Bair Down Farm.

"Jacko 's a very brave man, no doubt," said Trinny, "but there 's one thing he fears, and that 's danger. If these here gentlemen of the road was to play housebreaker and waken him some night with the prod of a pistol-barrel under his night-cap he 'd — well — he would n't argue long!"

"Serve the silly fool right if they did pounce," said Mrs. Trinny. "'T is well known that he keeps his money in a pair of his wife's stockings."

"One pair would n't hold it, though she 's got very fine legs, I 've heard Jacko say," answered Trueman. "He 's a rich old bird, and he boasts of his cash; and stories like that get about without wings as we all know. 'T will be cub-hunting afore long, thank the Lord for his mercies; but for my part I think us had all better go Blackadder hunting this winter. And if I was a highwayman I 'd far rather be run down in the open and stand afore hounds a bit and die game, than get turned out of a cart some chill morning afore sun-up, with no music in my ear but a tolling bell."

"You will make my flesh creep," said Mrs. Trinny. "You always have done, and I suppose you always will. 'T is the poetry bubbling in you, no doubt."

"Ab — so — lutely!" answered Mr. Trinny. "You always knew I was a poetic sort of man and it 's no good grumbling now if it will out. But these roystering cutthroats ain't poetry, though good material for it, and nobody will be better pleased than me when some brave boy corners 'em, and gets fifty sovereigns for the rascals — dead or alive."

CHAPTER VII

A GENTLEMAN OF THE ROAD FIRES HIS PISTOL AND MISSES HIS AIM

DARK clouds hung heavy between Felix Godolphin and his father, and despite the efforts of the clergyman to bring them together in an understanding spirit, they continued antagonistic. It was inevitable, for the obstinate will of the race belonged both to the old man and the young, and the fact that it had been diverted in the son's mind to flow far from these ancient channels it pursued in his father's, made reconciliation or fellow-feeling possible between them only by some direct miracle. For neither would give way. Sir Archer refused to tolerate and condone the advanced opinions of Felix, while the youth was not prepared to subscribe to a policy he despised and a party he charged with the present woes of the world. Far otherwise, he busied himself against his country, and with the warm heart and foolish head of boyhood enlisted himself in romantic schemes for the amelioration of the lot of those nearest at hand. He had striven to intrigue with Robert Burgoyne and proposed to make friends outside the prison, who should be powerful enough to represent the sorry lot of the Americans at headquarters, and so better their condition and procure the dismissal of their present useless agent and the Commandant of the War Prison. These men were thorns in the lot of the prisoners, and it had been well enough if

they had been superseded; but Felix Godolphin and another hot-head or two who joined him were powerless to press any such change. A letter was intercepted, and there came a day when a mounted soldier brought this missive to Sir Archer, together with another letter from Captain Short.

Felix himself saw Sergeant Bradridge arrive and, knowing too well that a communication had miscarried, could hazard a shrewd guess at what lay in store for him. His first inclination was to depart and give his father time to recover his temper from the loss of it that would now overtake him; but he changed his mind by evil chance and went before Sir Archer a few minutes later when sent for.

One Silas Squibbs, butler to the General, brought the message, and he exercised the right of an old retainer to breathe caution. He was a long-faced, narrow-eyed, narrow-lipped old man, and little appeared upon his impassive countenance to promise sentiment or compassion; but hid deep in his heart and concealed with utmost skill from every eye, lurked Whig principles of the most pronounced character.

He sympathized very heartily with his master's son, but took exceeding care never to show it, and on all occasions paraded a loyalty to Sir Archer's party that he was far from feeling.

"You 've to go afore the master," he said. "But take an old man's advice and make yourself scarce, my dear. God forgive me, but I 'll tell him you 're out. He 's like the bull of Bashan. Don't you beard him till the sun 's gone down on his wrath."

"That 's all right, Squibbs. I know. I saw the sergeant ride in and ride out again. I guessed what he 'd

brought. What 's the good of waiting? I 'll go. I 'm not afraid of my father."

"No — that 's the pity of it. If you was, 't would be better for us all. But the storm that 's brewing now be a proper tempest wi' lightning in the clouds. There 'll be more than thunder this time. When his honour's gills go mulberry colour, then 't is any port in a storm, and devil take the hindmost."

"You 're a fiddle-faced old coward, Squibbs," answered Felix. "Come in and see the row. 'T will be something to tell about. My plan 's miscarried, I doubt. Well, I 'll try again, and not fifty fathers shall come between me and my duty — as I see it."

He marched before his father and found the old man stumping up and down in his study. Two letters lay on the desk open before him, and Felix saw that one was in his own writing, directed to Robert Burgoyne, while the other came from Captain Short.

Sir Archer wasted no words.

"You incarnate traitor!" he cried. "This — this is my reward for giving you a liberal education! Here, under my roof, you plot to serve the enemies of your country and throw in your lot with those who would smite England into the dust. You dishonest rogue — the first Godolphin that could ever be called one. And my son — my son to plot and sneak and employ mean tools to do his dirty work! My son's name to stink in the nostrils of his country! It is too much, you degenerate scoundrel — too much for me to suffer; and I will not suffer it. Short is merciful — more merciful than I. He might have had you shot — shot like the traitor you are — but he, an outsider, has more consideration for a father's feelings, than his own son. He has a thought for my

disgrace and dishonour. He remembers what I have done and suffered for my country; he pities my white hairs. But what know you of pity, you jackal? What care you that an honourable parent is driven frantic by your dastardly wickedness? Speak — and for the last time shall it be. I have done with you henceforth."

"You 'll be wiser to be calmer, sir," answered Felix. "I regret from my heart that my plans have failed and that this knave, the prisoners' agent, and this coward, their Commandant, are not alike swept out of power. I loathe my country for its attitude to honourable foes; I loathe my country for its cant and hypocrisy. I would build on these dead, festering bones of England a new England where the light is Liberty and the watchword Mercy. You and those who think as you do are tyrants. They sin in ignorance; they run in herds. I despise and hate the herd! Henceforth I stand alone, and will account neither to you nor any man for my actions. I am not a child. I have a right to think for myself and choose my own party and my own ideals. You shall at least treat me like a reasonable being."

"The last thing you are. Who parleys with traitors? What rights do you dare to claim? This is but the culmination of your manifold offences. This is but the deed that drives home the seditious words and scandalous opinions. Now it is my turn and as an honest man — whose heart bleeds to think that he ever got you — as an outraged father I speak, and bid you leave my home for ever. Be gone! You are disinherited and cast out. My duty demands it. My conscience orders it. Oh, Felix, Felix, ill-named, you have torn my heart; you have wounded my soul. I shall carry the wounds for ever — worse wounds than the enemies of my

country could give. Be gone, I say, and see my face no more."

"And this is justice!" said the other bitterly. "This is your Christian faith and practice, to cast out your son, whose only sin is courage to think for himself and not to step cowardly in another man's shoes. This is your soldier's honour — to fling over a man whose crime is enthusiasm for all humanity, love of his kind, longing to make the world a better and a cleaner and a happier place! You are led by scare-crows, sir — like the rest of benighted England. You are the fool — not I; you are the traitor to your blood and to mankind — not I. I will go and gladly go; but God bear me witness that never again, so long as I draw breath, will I darken your door and call you father!"

"In that at least you speak truth — you whose talk is but a tissue of lies and folly. Son of mine you never shall be after this day, and threshold of mine you never more shall pass! Leave me, and I will sit in sackcloth and ashes and call upon the Highest to be merciful to you. For your dead mother's sake I shall pray for you, that the Lord may have mercy where man can do but justice Your fate is dark, for you go, a madman, into the world and I would rather think of you a child again — a child if need be sleeping in the grave on your dead mother's bosom — than wandering the earth guided by your evil passions and poisonous principles — a menace to society and a warning to all men."

"So much for that," answered the younger. "And I too will pray, for mayhap your God is greater than you think Him, father; I too will pray for you, that in fulness of time your eyes may be opened and your heart softened to the grief of the prisoners and captives and them that sit

in darkness. And think of me henceforth as ranged upon their side. To them I go, and stand henceforth for the oppressed and the unloved and down-trodden, and all that have no friends."

He went out from before his father, and his heart beat so hard that he was almost stifled. He sought Miranda first, told her briefly of the quarrel, and begged her to be patient and brave under the awful blow that had fallen upon them. He was reckless and indifferent, and said bitter things against his father and his name.

"'T would have choked me to bide much longer," he assured her. "Waste no tears on me. I am thankful enough to be free, and trust myself and my own right arm very willingly. Prince Hall has been a prison to me these many days. Henceforth, free from it and its obligations, I can seek man's work and record a practical protest against the things I hate and abhor. Be not cast down. I guess shrewdly at what is passing in your young head, Miranda, and know a little of what Burgoyne is thinking too. But be patient and long suffering, and trust the future to spread golden wings. Father is past praying for, it would seem. But you will do your best to bring peace into his frosty heart. You shall hear anon how it fares with me."

The girl soon dried her tears and expressed her mingled grief and admiration.

"You 're a hero," she said. "Every bit as much a hero as our father's self; and you will show him that it is so presently and prove all heroes wear not red coats. I have twenty pounds and will get it for you. That 's not very heroic, but it may be useful. Oh, would I could go with you to help right the world, Felix! But instead I 'll

lie close and strive to right dear father. He 'll list to me if I pipe gently."

She fetched her nest-egg and made him take it. Then she watched him saddle his horse and put a brace of pistols in the holsters.

"Have you thought where you shall lie to-night?" she asked, and he shook his head.

"I know not. Fate shall guide and chance shall lead." he said.

There was the far-away, unsteady light of fanaticism in his eyes, but his mouth was fixed and firm. Miranda kissed him on it and restrained her tears till he rode quietly away down the long avenue; then she hid herself and wept very heartily.

Deep anger at his lot surged up in the young man's soul as he rode forward. He resented in a storm of wrath this sudden fate. With eyes blinded by passion; with lungs that inhaled mighty breaths of the northern wind, Felix Godolphin rode on to the Moor, gave his horse a loose rein, and let it carry him where it would. But presently he grew calmer, steadied himself, and turned towards the sunset. His purposes were vague; his soul burned under the injustice and tyranny of the world as exemplified in the recent quarrel with his father. Sir Archer stood for all that Felix hated. His frozen opinions and stern judgments stung the young and generous-spirited youth to the quick; but he hovered on the brink of deadly dangers now, because his hot heart had overcome his brain; the ideas and aspirations seething in his spirit arose unbridled, untinctured by any reason. His soul was up in arms, and he lusted to be at the throat of principalities and powers. He was outraged, and went unrestrained by any consideration whatsoever. He

wanted to strike, and strike hard. The society that had driven him into revolt; the society which his father represented; the society that had entered into an unjust war with America and was now grinding and starving five thousand free-born sons of liberty in its rusty jaws—that society he desired to smite hip and thigh; he hungered to see it in the dust and grovelling for mercy.

Godolphin climbed the range of hills that extends beyond Crockern, the old site of the Tinners' hypæthral parliament. He ascended Higher White Tor, the monarch of the range, and stood for a few moments on that height before descending into the valley beneath. Great wildernesses of shattered stone, shining bog, and dark heath swept round about him, and extended mile upon mile into the hazes of the far horizon. The red light of evening burned upon the dead brake fern; and over the waste were scattered little droves of ponies and flocks of black-faced, horned sheep, with a bell-wether's wool-muffled music to guide them and denote their presence where the fog hid all. The glory of the brake blazed on every hill and lined the valleys with its russet splendour; while over many a lofty ridge, in many a marshy bottom by stream-side, black, naked scars showed whence next winter's firing had been harvested by the moor-men, and tawny ravines and water-logged gullies of rich chocolate-coloured earth extended this way and that in utmost desolation. For here the peat lay like a sponge, twenty feet thick on the granite heart of the Moor; and hid in its depths lay many a branch and bough of hazel and alder and birch, that aforetime flourished when Dartmoor was better wooded than now. The light deepened, and the marshes and streams glittered with splashes of blood-red fire. Far away eastward and westward the lowlands

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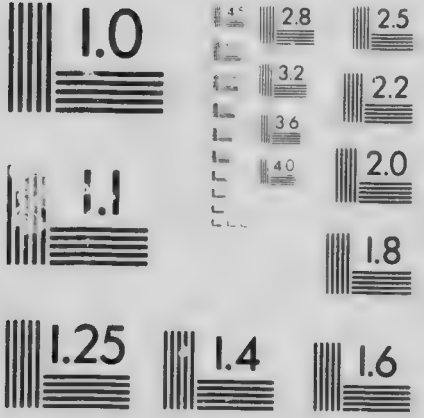

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were dimly visible through a purple veil, where earth extended under forest and fallow, hill and valley, to the confines of the Channel and the Severn Sea.

Felix Godolphin had determined to ride to Okehampton that night, for there dwelt one who worshipped him well and lent no doubtful ear to his opinions. Dame Primrose Parlby was his mother's sister — a childless widow of great wealth and Whig principles. The air cooled the young man's head and steadied his judgment. He thought upon his aunt, and since no immediate opportunity to strike at society offered itself from the austere summit of Higher White Tor, he postponed his crusade and prepared to descend.

Then it was that a strange thing met his eye, and from the heart of the Moor, above a lonely goyle or gulley, aloft among the serpent windings of an infant river, isolated, cut off and hemmed in on all sides by impenetrable bogs, he saw a thin ribbon of peat smoke creeping out like a feather upon the sky. And the feather was of ruddy hue, for heaven now burnt with a gorgeous autumnal sunset, that lighted the grey heads of the hills, flushed the waters, and made a riot of fading scarlet and gold upon the green purity of the western horizon.

The smoke rose from a ruin known to few even among the moor-men; for times and conditions had changed since miners streamed these upper valleys for tin in Elizabeth's reign. The place was now deserted; the tinner's home, a ruin; the marks of their work, reduced to grey smudges of granite débris half-hidden in whortleberry and ling. But Felix knew the spot. It was not a fortnight since he had walked over the bogs for snipe, and the roofless hut showed no sign of life at that date.

It lay not far from the road he designed to take across mid-most moor for Okehampton; and now he turned and took it in his way, to find what uncommon chance had brought men to light a fire in such a spot. He hoped, peradventure, to meet prisoners escaped from Prince Town and help them on their way to safety; instead, he came upon two free men and had to thank Providence for his own life in the encounter.

His horse whinnied a hundred yards from the ruin, and another, hidden from sight behind a broken wall, made answer. In an instant two figures appeared, and one, drawing a pistol, aimed it at Godolphin's steed and fired point blank.

The bullet shrieked past the rider's side but missed both man and horse.

"Steady, you damned fool!" he shouted. "Hold your hand! I came as a friend — a friend to every hang-dog, cut-throat rascal on earth!"

"We 'll see as to that," shouted Will Workman, for it was he who had fired the shot. "Hold up your hands, my man! You 've surprised a secret that may cost you dear."

The highwaymen came forward and stood one on each side of their visitor. Blackadder looked at the rider, while Workman scanned the horse.

"Your name and business," said Shadrach shortly.

"My name 's Felix Godolphin and my business is revenge. I 've just been cast out of my father's house — disinherited, cursed for an ungodly, England-hating renegade — a foe of my country — an enemy to the right that is might. I 'm at war with all the forces that mould mankind to-day. I 'm panting to battle with the cowardice and cruelty I see everywhere. I want to be a hawk

among hawks, an eagle among eagles, not a cur in a pack, not a maggot in a pear, not a sheep in a flock. I hate our wars and our blustering, bragging brutalities on land and sea; I hate our cant and our hypocrisy. I despise my own nation, for it is fallen among cruel masters, and from the king on his throne to the lowest Jack-in-office — all, all are corrupt and ignorant and selfish. I 'm hungering to strike a blow and drive it home. I 'm a desperate man and ready for desperate means to make my purpose clear. And what men are you that hide here, like a brace of kestrels, far from sight and sound of the cursed world? And why do you shoot at me, like a pair of frightened schoolboys, without first learning whence I come and why?"

"Brave words!" said Blackadder. "Time was when Will here and I were wont to talk like that. 'T was society drove us upon the road. We had no choice but prey upon it, or let it prey on us. Now we eat and drink at society's expense, and to-morrow — or the next day — or possibly the next — we may die at society's expense. I am Blackadder — a name that has made certain fine fellows shiver in their shoes of late. I am descended from Irish kings. There is royal blood in my veins. We aristocrats cannot suffer the herd — the herd chokes us with its effluvia; it stifles us with its breath; deafens us with its bleating. Will, here, had a lawyer to his father — so he sayeth. But no trace of such parentage survives in him. He hates the law very heartily and is like me — a law to himself. So much for us; and now ——"

"The stew gets over-cooked," said Workman, "and I am hungry."

"Let me eat with you," suggested Felix. "You are

men after my own heart. Let me eat with you and learn from you and bide with you! A curse on birth and breeding and upbringing if it turns a man into a selfish brute and starves his bowels of compassion for his kind. Let me come to you and share your lot and teach you more than you know."

"Two 's company and three 's none, my young fighting-cock," said Blackadder.

"Three 's a lucky number!" retorted Felix. "Three 's a number of might. Three nails crucified the Redeemer — He who was on the side of the oppressed, who fought for the weak against the strong. Three are the Persons in the Trinity. You stare; but I tell you men that you take your calling too easily — yourselves too lightly. If you would listen to me, I would teach you great things — would show you how to build up a party and grow into a power. History is full of such heroic undertakings. the man of power — the hero — the Napoleon — the Nelson — if by good chance he is a free man and not the slave of the government — such a man can collect the forces of disorder and revolution, as the wolf-tamer collects wolves, and tame and train into obedience and break and remodel until a formidable force ——"

"Have done, thou dreamer!" laughed Workman. "What have plain gentlemen of the road to do with robber bands and revolutions? Come and eat — and hand me over your pistols first. Feel no fear: you shall receive them again. Such a fire-eater and poet is like to need them before his pilgrimage take him much further."

Blackadder measured Felix with his heavy eyes; but he showed no amusement at his conversation.

"You have thought to purpose," he said, "but you

are raw and green and smarting under your father's injustice. Cut off with a shilling? That is of interest to such as I am. Injustice is very vile at all times — never viler than between a father and his son. But a soldier once, a soldier always. 'T is a hateful walk of life and saps a man's humanity. Maybe we can help you in this righteous cause."

They brought the youth in and presently he ate with them. The meal was rough, for each in turn dipped into a smoking stew that filled a pot over a peat fire. The highwaymen suffered Felix to relate his wrongs, and now chaffed, now praised him, now listened to a design for liberating the war prisoners, now heard him again offer to throw in his lot with them.

"'T will break your father's heart," said Workman, but Felix laughed with scorn at the idea.

"His heart! His heart is stone. He would gladly stand by the gallows if I came to it. He has broke me, not I him. It is my turn now. Would that you had heard him drive me from him with a contempt and loathing that gashed my very heart. I hate him. But that he is my father I would slay him!"

He raved upon his theme, and Blackadder — deeply interested before a spectacle beyond his experience — was content to listen. Then the more practical Workman dragged a great turnip watch from his fob and spoke.

"In half an hour the Moreton coach passes Bennett's Cross — that ruined symbol by the high-road. You know it, doubtless. There my friend and I deign to make our next claim on the children of fortune, and 't is time we set about it."

Then Blackadder spoke.

"Look you, young sparrow-hawk, would you nest with us in truth, or is this some passing whim of passion got in your brain at your father's rough usage?"

"Willingly — willingly I 'll join you," answered Felix, "and willingly I 'd draw a thousand others to do the like. Love and mercy are dead in the world; then let us reign by fear for a season and make our rulers listen to reason at the mouth of our cannon. With your help I 'll wager we might loose those brave hordes yonder, for their soldier guards are a cowardly crew and a dozen fearless men would brave and beat a hundred of them."

"Meantime the Moreton coach is on the road," interrupted Workman.

"'T is each for himself just now in this fine England of ours," declared Blackadder; "but I 'd lend the boys up aloft a ready hand were the chance to offer. Ride along with us, young sir, and we 'll try your metal. Times are hard and all men are liars; therefore take it not ill if Workman and I still doubt you. But there 's a coach to be stopped — what say you to that?"

"I applaud it. I 'll willingly aid you!"

The highwayman looked at him.

"Think twice. If your heart is faint, go in peace before you take so final a step. It means something very different from what you guess. We are no saviours of men, but wild beasts that prey on 'em. You know the sign we were born under?"

"'T is means to an end," answered Godolphin. "I am young, but I am hard and strong. Prove me! Lend me a mask and I will stop the coach myself!"

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!" crowed Workman. But Blackadder took Felix at his word.

"If you act as bravely as you talk ——" he said.

Then he felt in his pocket and brought out a black mask pierced with two eye-holes.

"Have at 'em, young rake-hell! And Will and I will stand by ready to help you if needs be. 'T will puzzle 'em not a little, for the shape and size of Workman and myself are only too well known; but you come between, and your horse is of a different colour."

They rode away together, and presently Felix Godolphin, with face hidden and pistols primed, sat on his great flea-bitten gelding by Bennett's Cross and waited for the coach. His new friends had disappeared and watched him, themselves unseen.

CHAPTER VIII

FELIX GODOLPHIN BEGINS TO SET THE WORLD RIGHT

OUT of the gloaming stole the mist, and its grey fingers crept about the high-road, that here ran darkly and with no compromise straight across the wilderness. Then, as a last gleam of wild orange light flashed upon the west, and the highest points of Dartmoor hove up against it before vanishing in the increasing vapours, there appeared a spot in the lonely way. It increased quickly and soon declared itself to be a mail coach drawn along by four galloping horses and driven by a man in a scarlet coat.

Godolphin's heart beat heavily against his ribs, and for a moment the significance of the step that he was about to take forced itself upon his understanding. The act would put him beyond the pale for ever; and worse than that, the crime was capital. Henceforth every honest hand must be against him. His life would be at the mercy of the community. The man who shot him or dragged him to justice would be doing the world good service. "The pale? I am already beyond the pale — every brave spirit should put himself beyond the pale!" So he believed and told himself. He called to mind men who had fought society, begun as its bitter enemy and ended as its saviour. He was young; the future stretched before him. He trusted himself and believed that his wrong-headed ambition was of the

soul. With no ill-will to any man, but a burning desire to revenge his wrongs on all, he rode out now, stood before the on-coming coach, drew a pistol, and pointed it at the head of the driver in the scarlet coat.

"Pull up — pull up, friend! Be sure that I shan't detain you, for you carry His Majesty's mails. 'T is only a matter of what your passengers have about them of superfluous cash and trinkets. Quick, gentlemen!"

He rode up to the coach and steadied the guard, who was dragging out a fowling-piece.

"Nay, my lad, the game's against you. Fling that in the road, or I shall drop you into it. Hands up!"

The shaking youngster obeyed, and Felix spoke again.

"Be speedy, I pray you! The mail is late, and the roads are very bad between Two Bridges and Tavistock. Gentlemen, please!"

He was at the window of the coach, to find four passengers, all men, and eight angry eyes stared at his pistol barrel. His blood surged in his veins; his heart, grown stagnant since he left his home, leapt again. Here was power! Here was the herd — the smug, prosperous, hard-hearted herd at his mercy!

None showed fight; but the nearest man cursed the robber for a hateful pest, and prayed the day might soon come when he would hang in chains. Whereon Godolphin struck him in the mouth and bade him cease.

For a moment there was a strange silence, broken only by the prancing of the restrained horses. Then purses appeared, and Felix called for pocket-books. He found himself hard as a rock, and his brutality amazed him. A strange spirit had got into him: the exultant, insolent, Dionysian spirit of the road. He felt as though he was tipsy.

One man sat beside the driver, and when he had taken heavy toll of all inside the coach, he called to him.

He was a soldier of the garrison at Prince Town, and Felix knew him.

"Quick, my lad!" he exclaimed, "I must n't keep the whip there waiting longer, else he 'll bear me a grudge."

"You dog! If I were armed!" answered the soldier, and for answer Godolphin discharged a pistol so that the bullet sped six inches from the young man's face.

The horses danced across the road. A man in the coach screamed.

"To teach you manners, that is all. Open your mouth again and my next bullet will be in your calf's head! Your purse, and quick about it!"

The man on the box seat spoke no more, but obeyed. He flung his purse to the ground and Felix swept off his hat.

"Good-night and a good journey, gentlemen! Your servant to command!"

The coach thundered away and vanished in the gathering fog. Then Blackadder and Workman, who had approached at sound of the pistol shot, cantered out of the Moor.

Felix related his adventure. He was excited, and his words tripped over each other. He handed his spoil to Workman and spoke to the other highwayman.

They applauded him, and declared that he had acted as to the manner born.

"A pretty haul for a beginner — four watches — a decent seal or two, three rings, and fifty-eight pounds in gold and notes. You 'll learn to squeeze more cleverly with practice, but 't is a later branch of the art," declared Will.

"We lie nigh Chagford," explained the elder man. "Certain friends of liberty have lent an ear to us and find themselves none the poorer for their ready help and succour. There is a little farm known in the neighbourhood as Metherill. A few miles and we are there. A man and his widowed mother have been ill-used by the world and are getting even with it, aided by Workman and myself. Will, here, is hot for you and must have his way. You are one of us now — a minion of the moon. You have done well — vastly well. I like your eye. Judge men by their eyes. 'T is the only member that cannot be taught to lie. Now let us be gone and we will drink your health afore we sleep. Know you the highwayman's toast? 'A full purse, a good horse, and no bungling at the end!'"

The excitement of his mad action buoyed up Godolphin and, from the past agony and grief, he passed into a roystering and reckless mood. His high ideals became for a time obscured; he lived in the present and longed to be at work again. Society might go hang: he would at least live a man's life; right wrong if he came across it; take from the rich to give to the poor; taste of adventure and romance and leave a name behind him, when the outraged community should corner him at last and exact the appointed penalty.

They reached the farm after night was down, and a lantern waved thrice from a back wall at Workman's whistle. Then they went forward and a man appeared — an ape-like, slouching thing with doggish eyes and great hairy arms. Workman addressed him as 'Kek,' and he led away the horses. Returning presently he administered to his guests. Food was cooking, and a woman tended it — an ancient creature with inflamed eyes and a large

mouth fallen on empty gums. She was stout and very bald. Indeed her neck, red as a vulture's, presented a hideous spectacle. But she was cheerful and of a merry spirit. She heard the news and congratulated Felix Godolphin on his company.

"A very brave young gentleman and no mistake! Stopped the coach single-handed! That 's the stuff great men are made of. Them as can stop a coach be leaders of men. Give 'em the chance and they 'll make the world bend to 'em. I know — I know! I 've been on the side of them that flouted law and order all my life, thank God! 'T is we be the strong and deserve the strong meat and the strong drink!"

Secure in this eyrie, with Kek, Mother Brimblecombe's ape-like son, keeping watch at the outer gate, the highwaymen enjoyed their ease, ate and drank, sat by the fire, and when the meal was ended, lit long clay pipes.

They drew Felix out and let him talk. He was still excited, and aired his opinions, to the amusement of his listeners. Workman chaffed him and laughed at his ideas; but Blackadder, a man of more thoughtful mind, was interested, and listened with few comments. To hear the fiery lad thus running on seemed to turn back history for the grim, watchful man, and restore his own heyday of youth and dreaming. He remembered a time when he was at odds with the world and had sought to do man's work in righting wrong and rescuing the poor from their oppressors. But fate was too strong for him; he had slipped into lawless ways in his battle against the powers that controlled the world; and almost before he realized his fall, had found himself barred and cast out beyond the possibility of return.

"We can't rule — we rare spirits," he said presently.

"The world don't want us to rule. The sheep want a sheep to reign over 'em; the geese want a goose. We can't rule, so we must rob — 't is the only way if you 're born to rule and your fellow-creatures won't let you. I thought like you once and hoped great things. But I got cast out for my pains — cast out without my share. So being what I am — a man with the blood of kings in my veins — I 've took my share — and a bit over."

"And who is there can blame you, if he be worthy to judge?" asked Felix "What built England — the rabbit instinct or the eagle instinct?"

"'T was the eagle," declared Blackadder. "'T was the men like Raleigh and Drake and Hawkins — pirates all; and if such men as they came amongst us again, 't is such men as we would haste to serve 'em, because they understood the meaning of manhood. But this puny race — 't is playing cat's cradle with England. If Drake was to rise from his grave, I 'd be the first to follow his drum, and he 'd be the first to mark my parts and set me high work in the nation!"

Godolphin applauded these sentiments and Workman laughed at them.

"Odds my life, Shad, this young gamebird here will be o' your side, for you 're dreamers, both. Soon plain Will Workman will be out in the cold. You 'll spout your fine opinions like a pair of stage players — and leave me to do the work belike! And when the world wakes up to the men you are, and puts a gold crown round your high and mighty heads, instead of a hemp cravat round your necks, then I hope you 'll remember your humble servant!"

"Have no fear, Workman; we sink or swim together — we fight or swing together."

"But character conquers the world!" cried Felix, 'and if a brace of brave stoats can clear a rabbit warren, why should not three such men as we are, gather others about us and make head and dictate to the nation presently? Stranger things have happened in history!"

"Have they? Well, history 's not my strong point," confessed Workman, "though I can tell you all about Richard Turpin and Thomas King — aye, and a prize-fighter or two. But when we come into our own, of course the black masks will be forgot. 'T is very vile to remember the trade that lifted us. A coat of arms you shall have, Shad — a very fine king's coat — made in Ireland, without a doubt. But for me — 't will be the old song, I 'm thinking."

"Sing it then," answered Blackadder. "I 've not heard you pipe this many a night."

"Little you 'll love the song," declared Will, "but 't is well to come down out of the clouds sometimes and face ugly truth. A highwayman with a price on his head is ugly truth, and the price is ugly truth, and we, being men of our hands with a nice understanding of the value of money, know well enough what our fellow-creatures will do for fifty golden sovereigns. That 's the figure — dead or alive. The world wants us pretty bad, and presently 't will want us more still; and when the blood money rises to a hundred sovereigns, then we must look out, for what man or woman will be faithful against such a gold mine? I know of none on earth but Kek and his dam."

"We make our own price and can always out-bid the beggarly law," answered Blackadder, "as we can always outride the beggarly Bow Street runners. When we

fall, [illegible] to a regiment, [illegible] ... or ... and then to sleep."

Mother Brimblecombe, at sound of Workman's uplifted voice, came to listen. She nodded and beamed out of her red-lidded eyes upon him, for he was her favourite. Thus sang the highwayman—

[illegible]
[illegible]
And [illegible] swagger, roar, and swear
And [illegible] he was to bear.

The [illegible] his mare, set to it
[illegible] Ah! cries he, no doubt,
You are a Gentleman of fantastic note
And could display a very glorious Coat.

Prithee what [illegible] there? And here's to your [illegible]
Sir, says the Herald, his two merry Eyes
One Pompion and one Cochineal and [illegible]
A Jubilee Peasant and a Pendant Rope
And for a grace mine your Blessed Shapes
There is a bird i' the Crest that [illegible]

Blackadder made his favourite jest.

"Dammy, Will! You 're no better than a highwayman!" he cried. "And now to bed for me. Mother [illegible] will make you a couch, young man, and to-morrow we rest our horses and ourselves. You must know that one of us is always on the watch. Will and I have not both slept at one time for five years. But, if you are to join us indeed, then there 's hope of shorter watches and better repose for us all."

"Time enough for that. We must prove our young recruit first," answered Workman, "and now turn in, Shadrach, for you're drunk as an owl — with sleep in [illegible] and I'll relieve. Kek and see to the

horses. Master Godolphin here shall keep me company."

"So be it; and tell him what we purpose on the day after to-morrow," answered Blackadder.

He rose and climbed up a stone stair that led to a low chamber under the roof of the farm; while Workman and Felix went out into the night.

"At four of the clock I wake him for the morning watch," explained Will. "Then you and I will take his place and sleep till day."

For a time they talked briskly while the night wind came and went and the night birds cried. Before dawn the sky cleared and silence fell between the watchers. Each turned upon his own thoughts, his private hopes and fears. Orion, the hunter, glimmered upon heaven and Sirius cast its glittering light into Godolphin's eyes. He was an educated man and now, from his own affairs and hopes and desires, he turned a moment and considered the mighty sun above him, the master-star of Egypt, the star of the Dog, that provided the inundation of the Nile and rose sinister with promise of fever and death. The procession of the equinoxes had long since robbed it of the old significance, and three thousand years had set back its annual advent by six weeks. There was no longer any bale upon its wings. Yet, albeit the fairest fixed star in heaven, it had a dark companion never absent from it.

His own affairs looked pitiful to the watcher in the light of the fixed stars. It was the hour of lowest human vitality, and his soul sank within him before the awful memory of what that day had brought. Had he, like Sirius, a dark companion hidden within his soul, that waited and watched ever and had brought him to this pass on the very threshold of life?

CHAPTER IX

RICHARD BOLT EARNS THREE GUINEAS

RICHARD BOLT, the master of Dart Hollow, belonged to an old order of agriculturists now vanishing. He prospered because he did his work himself and paid no body of hirelings to do it for him. Early and late he laboured, and at present, to stay the torture of his mind, did two men's work and daily exhausted himself. Only so might sleep visit him, and often the solitary hind, who helped Richard at his farm, would see his master drop into slumber before their supper was ended.

The man found his obstinate opinions and his love move together. He desired Charity Caunter above all things that earth could give him; but he assured himself that love by no means blinded his eyes; and he believed that the thing she designed to do was a mad and fatal one. To wed an American sailor and be cast out of her home was surely no enterprise for Charity, or any other sane woman; but knowing Jacko Caunter and his sledge-hammer opinions, Richard felt positive that the girl's purpose must end in her ruin. He took upon himself the task of standing between her and her lover at any cost to himself, and he believed that in no way could he better show his love for her than by preventing the thing that Charity was desirous to bring about.

Bolt was deceived, but only partially. He was as

honest as a man mad with love may generally be expected to show himself. Sincerely he believed that Jacko's daughter was set on folly, and sincerely he determined to prevent it if he could do so. That, Benjamin Gun once away, a chance might revive for him, he frankly hoped; but the ultimate destination of Cherry lay far ahead. His present resolve was to put the American out of the hunt once and for all; and he convinced himself very fully that, did he succeed, the maiden from Bair Down would certainly live to thank him.

Bolt's farm stood by East Dart, and belonged to the ancient order of 'tenements' that rose aforetime when mediæval man first coveted Dartmoor, began to reclaim it, and built his houses in its most snug and sequestered river valleys. The homestead was independent of the lords of the forest, and Duchy held no rights therein. Ten acres of fair land stretched round about. A dozen cows grazed in one croft, pigs and poultry crowded to the open door, and the latter often hopped and fluttered into the house-place to see what might be gathered from the blue stone floor of the kitchen. Here Richard and his man, Saul Scobhull, dwelt alone, and old Saul, a widower, never wearied of begging his master to find a wife and fetch her to Dart Hollow that their forlorn state might be bettered. But the truth he did not know, though when citing maidens of promise within his master's reach he had not seldom praised Charity Caunter and declared that no farmer might desire a handsomer and more capable lady.

And now chance willed to test Richard's determination, and it seemed that the enemy of his peace would be given into his hand. For the great day set aside by the survivors of the *Vermont*, the day determined upon for

Benjamin Gun's escape, at length dawned, and after the event had fallen out, Bolt found himself among the first to learn the news.

But it was not until near twilight on the momentous occasion that the master of Dart Hollow learned what Sergeant Bradridge and half a dozen red-coats could tell him; and the soldiers themselves had made their startling discovery but little before the moment when Bolt came among them.

The building, destined to be a rectory house for the new hamlet of Prince Town, stood not far distant from the church, but it was still short of completion. The walls had yet to be finished, and upon them Andy Midge, Placid Petersen, Owen Seapach, and their mess-mates now worked at the second storey. Johnny Wood, the powder-monkey, and Charley Miller handled the hods and brought up the bricks and mortar; Thomas Midge mixed lime and hair below; while the others laboured with trowels, save Benjamin, who on this occasion was busy with another seaman in the erection of new scaffolding.

Near noon, the builder himself appeared and climbed the ladder to Petersen, Seapach, and Andy Midge. He was a mild, easy man without imagination, and perceiving the excellence of the work, congratulated the workmen and spoke to please them. But his words were ill-chosen.

"Blessed if Britishers could have done this better," he said complacently. "You fellows might very well earn your living in this country. I know worse workmen who never did naught else but lay bricks. But you sailor-men can do anything and everything. 'T is amazing that such clever chaps should be such fools as to want

to go fighting. When war 's over you can come to me and show some of my lazy hands at Plymouth how to put a face on bricks and mortar."

Andy Midge answered him.

" We 'll show 'em something different from that — them and you and every other mother's son. When the *Mayflower* sailed, she took every man out of this dog-rotted country worth a salt herring. Wait — that 's all. Wait a few years till the States hev shook themselves together again. Then 't will be our turn, and next time we come to this country 't will be to blow Plymouth out of the water and give your derned bricklayers work to last them and their sons and their grandsons!"

" We 'll make a summer-house for our President out of your dirty little island," said Charley Miller, lowering a hod of mortar from his shoulder. " And if we 're downed for the minute, which may or not be so, 't won't be like that next time. A beaten nation hev gotten a long memory, my old chap. You wait and see what our children's children will do for England!"

" Larn it the meaning of justice and liberty, and its duty to its neighbours, we 'll hope," declared Placid Petersen. " Larn it to be straight, Charley. But to bluster and bully is only to pay it back in its own ill coin, so don't you do that."

" May I live to be the father of the man as 'll cut your next king's throat! That 's what I hope," declared Seapach; " for it 's any odds that he 'll be a coward and a knave like this one. Prince Town be called after the next king, the turnkeys tells us. Then let him come to Prince Town and smell the War Prison and hear what honest men think of him."

" And you fancy to praise us by saying we work as

clever as your west country lubbers!" exclaimed Benjamin Gun, who hung on to the scaffold sailor-wise above the builder's head. "Why, we 've forgot more than your chunkheads ever knew, master. I tell you that me and my mates would a tarnation sight sooner be badgers in Vermont, and live in the holes under the earth, than hev a drop of your blood in our veins!"

They chaffed and cursed, but the master builder was no politician and listened without anger to their railing.

"You 're good fellows all," he said, "and I 'll wager 't is only your empty bellies that make you so sharp-tongued. You 'd want for naught if I had my way."

Then he descended the ladder and spoke to an armed sentry at the bottom.

"You 've got a clever crew up aloft," he said, "and 't is a pity such good, useful men are not fed and clothed better. They 're worth fifteen shillings a week and beer money — every one of 'em. But as 't is, they be very bitter against us and thirst to blow Plymouth out of the water; and not a man amongst 'em but will breed foes to England when he goeth home again."

The red-coat grinned and grounded his musket.

"Few enough will ever go home," he answered. "They 'll breed English worms — that 's all they 'll breed. Smallpox be snapping 'em, like the trout in the river snap flies."

"A pity — a cruel pity, you may say," replied the other, rolling up his papers. "Never saw better masons' work and never expect to. This fine house and yonder church will stand for them and to their honour long after they and us be dead and forgotten out of mind."

Time passed; the sun sank upon the west, and the hour for returning to the mansions was come. A gang of

Americans, who had work in a distant granite quarry, marched from the Moor and drew up in double file before the rising buildings. Then Midge, Petersen, and the rest descended and fell into their places. Whistles blew, a signal was given, and the augmented band tramped upon its way into Prince Town.

A great light blazed over the west, and Dartmoor glowed in the sunset. Aloft in the blaze a little hawk hung steadfast on wings that did not seem to move. Wild cumuli, like a mighty herd of purple monsters, rolled across the sky, and the shepherd wind cried aloud as it drove them. Everywhere freedom reigned and flouted the sad sons of Freedom as they tramped — right, left — right, left — right, left — together. They were weary and spoke little; but among the group of men who had fought on the *Vermont* until she sank under them, and who now worked daily together at an occupation so different, brisk conversation passed in undertones. They whispered and laughed with their eyes; they cast hidden glances at the guard; they waited for the inevitable. For one of them who had set out with the rest that morning did not return, and they went in hope that his absence would not be noted until they regained Prison No. 4 and answered the call-over. But Benjamin Gun's disappearance was now perceived, and Sergeant Bradridge of the guard detected something wrong.

"Halt!" he cried suddenly, then turned to a soldier, and spoke.

"Where's that long chap who works at the rectory house? My life in red! I don't see him anywhere!"

"Ben Gun? Along with his mess, sergeant."

"Devil a bit!" answered the other. "I've got eyes if you're blind. You can see the man a mile off, for

he 's a head taller than t 'others. And he 's not with 'em now."

Bradridge walked up the line to prove that Gun was indeed missing from it. He accosted his mates, and soon regretted that he had done so, for they told a confusing story. Each appeared burning with eagerness to assist the sergeant, and each had a great deal to say. Andy Midge swore stoutly that Ben had stopped a moment to drink at a tap and then joined the other prisoners at the rear of the ranks; Charley Miller denied having seen him since they left work; Owen Seapach declared that Gun came down the ladder last and was called to carry a pail of water by a sentry; the boy, Johnny, said he saw Gun leave work an hour before the rest and go off between two soldiers; Placid Petersen declared that he had seen nothing of Gun since early in the afternoon; and Thomas Midge vowed that, now he came to think of it, he had heard Gun shouting to the man with whom he worked, and believed that he might have met with an accident. They contradicted one another heartily, wrangled among themselves, swore at each other, and left the guard in doubt and dire confusion.

Sergeant Bradridge, however, was a man of action, and proceeded with decision and dispatch. Moreover, he stood responsible, and knew that it might go ill with him if the American was proved to have escaped in broad day from the midst of a military guard. He ordered the band forward, and the hundred odd prisoners went on their road; then, as soon as the iron jaws of the gaol closed upon them, he reported his loss, raised a hue and cry, and, reinforced with a considerable company of soldiers and turnkeys, set out while it was yet light to scour the country and hunt the runaway sailor. Such a mystery

defied any theory of explanation, for it appeared impossible that a man clad in prison raiment and of a size so conspicuous as Gun could evade the guards and thus disappear unseen from their midst. Collusion was feared, and the sentries examined; but one and all answered honestly, nor had any parted with their hats and coats.

Search was first made at the building itself, and every hole, cranny, and chimney most carefully examined. The day's labour had been upon the breastwork of a flue, and this, with the walls round about it and the foundations far beneath, received sharp scrutiny. Even into the solid walls through the interstices of soft mortar the soldiers drove their bayonets; and half a new wooden floor was ripped up until no space of a size to conceal a rabbit remained unexplored.

"To the Moor he 's gone, though the Lord knows how he got off," grumbled Sergeant Bradridge. "The deuce is in 'em — they can get through keyholes and borrow birds' wings seemingly. We be but a lot of dull-eyed jolter-heads afore 'em. That 's ten got clear off inside a fortnight, and Commandant Short foaming at the mouth, and if I don't sleep in the cells to-night 't will be a miracle, for he 's got his knife in me a'ready along of that chap who stole the doctor's hat and cane and wig and went out in 'em afore the eyes of the nation. Ten, did I say? My life in red! 'T is twelve!"

The soldier to whom he spoke nodded.

"And four was drowned in Dart; and two died of weakness and hunger up 'pon top o' the Moor; and three was catched and brought back; and one was fetched up by Mr. Trueman Trinny's man, Jan French, who found him asleep in the larder one fine morning and made him fast afore he woke him up; and one got clear off and

reached they parole chaps at Ashburton, who helped him to the sea."

"And Benjamin Gun will try to do likewise; but 't is a disgrace to us and to Dartymoor if we can't take him; for he 's as big as a haystack," said a turnkey. "All the same, sergeant," he added, "none of us will be very wishful to lay him by the heels, I 'm thinking, for he was a proper chap, and kindly, and willing, and a mighty sight too good a man to freeze and starve by inches. We 'll hope that he 'll give death the slip and get back to his home some day."

Sergeant Bradridge looked at the sentries, and still doubted. Many were disaffected and many had helped the more wealthy prisoners to escape. Collusion was common. Only the week before, two men had been sent to prison for providing the Americans with materials for the making of counterfeit coin.

"If I thought that any amongst you had lent a hand, I 'd call on the Commandant to have you shot," he said. "And shot some of you 'll be afore long. 'T is war yet, not peace, and if you help the enemies of your country, for money or friendship, to escape from your country, so as they can get fighting again against her, then you 're traitors and did ought to be treated according."

The men vowed innocence, and for once they told the truth. Not even carelessness was their crime, for none could possibly have known how Gun had escaped them, or whither he had gone.

But the vanished man's chances, thus far apparently fair, were clouded before Bradridge and his troop regained the War Prison. It happened that they met Bolt riding upon a pony. He was known to Bradridge, and remembering Richard's familiarity with Dartmoor,

the sergeant stopped him now and told him the news.

"And Dart's in spate after yesternight's rain; and if he tried to cross he 'll go like others," said the soldier; "but it 's got abroad among 'em last week how those chaps from No. 6 were drowned in the river, so 't is as likely as not he 'll try south and go for Plymouth, and lie up in the woods by day."

"Who 's the man?" asked Bolt. He felt but little interested and indeed, for love of liberty, had himself helped one sailor to escape during the previous month. But the case was altered now when he heard the runaway's name.

"'T is Gun — Benjamin Gun," said a sentry, "and you ought to wish him catched more than most of us, Master Bolt, for you 've got a down on him over that red-cheeked girl — Mary Caunter's daughter. He offered for to hammer you afore us all a bit ago — you remember very well."

"The big man from No. 4!"

"That 's him; and three golden sovereigns for the chap as fetches him back alive, or reports him dead."

The dark face of Bolt grew brighter; but it was only as the storm-cloud flames when lightning-lighted.

"Alive or dead! I 'm as like to earn the money as another, I dare say. 'T is n't often I 'm against 'em, and I 'll own it. They 're good customers and rare good fellows, and they 've taught me a mighty lot well worth knowing. But him — Gun — that 's different, and I 've got very fair reasons for being o' your way of thinking where he's the matter. I 'll promise naught; but I 'm hopeful. Alive or dead — so be it. I 'll fetch him back afore this time to-morrow if I can."

The sergeant was suspicious.

"My life in red!" he cried. "But you talk as if the man was got in your pocket. What do you know more

than we do? 'T is your part as a lawful subject and sarvant of King George to help me, and I command you so to do. Here my men and me stand for Majesty, and 't is your bounden duty to aid us."

"I will — I mean to do it and I think I can do it. What I know don't matter to you; but what I know be none the less likely to lay long Gun by the heels afore the sun 's up. Trust me or not as you please; I 'll go my own way for my own reasons."

"You ban't the sort to help a man free and then sell him back to prison afterwards?" asked the sergeant. "A good few have done that here and there — a dirty, Judas trick — and I should n't like to think it of you or any honest man."

"No, no, I ban't that sort, Sergeant Bradridge. It shall be all fair and square, I promise you. I 'll tell you more after. Not from Adam do I know where the man be this minute; but come midnight and moonlight, I 've a pretty shrewd fancy I shall know; and then perchance he 'll find himself in my hands. Alive or dead 's the word!"

"Fetch him back alive," urged the other. "There 's too many of these reckless heroes dead a'ready, one way and another."

"'T will be alive, I guess," answered Richard Bolt; and with this prediction he left the soldiers and rode upon his way.

He called at the *Ring o' Bells* on his homeward journey and spoke with Trueman Trinny. One thought occupied Richard's mind, and deep within him an uneasy conscience pricked. After the fashion of man, therefore, he sought his fellow-man, and hoped to hear comfortable words that should help to justify his intention. "Another of

[illegible] off," he said. "It behooves us one and all to help law and order, no doubt."

[illegible] gave him a keen look from his twinkling [illegible]

"[illegible]; no doubt, Richard. But since when have [illegible] law and order so steadfast? I thought that [illegible] was on their side, for I 've heard you mighty indignant at the way government serves the poor fellows."

"True, true; and I say again 't is wrong; but to answer wrong with wrong — you 'd not hold with that?"

The other guessed how private circumstances had clouded his customer's outlook.

"Wrong and right are words we are prone to juggle with, and they look different according to the state of our souls," he answered. "You know sometimes of a morning, after a lively night, our livers are tired and the world do seem yellow as a guinea? Well, our souls can have hot coppers, too, Richard Bolt. So you be sure to get your point of view quite clear afore you do anything that can't be undone. What 's right to-day will often look wrong to-morrow — owing to the dose of life we 've took between. A man's self will come betwixt him and the truth oftener than any other man."

Richard regarded the other with suspicious eyes; but Trinny, as usual, uttered his wisdom with a laughing face.

"Cheero!" he said, and lifted his own glass. The host's drink never varied. He drank nothing but old port — one bottle a day and no more.

"You 're wise," answered Bolt. "Wrong and right do look different according to the state of our souls. Few there be who don't let their own good and evil colour their principles."

"Truly, Dick. In a word, you and me be very clever

far-seeing men, and quite thrown away at a plough-tail or behind a bar. Put a bold face on life and don't flinch from it, and do to others as you would have 'em do to you — runaway prisoners of war included — and have another drink before you go — my shout!"

"That 's the Golden Rule — to do to others as we would have 'em do to us, Trinny. You can argue against it, however."

"To be sure, to be sure! What can't you argue against? Don't the fox argue against it when he sneaks my ducks and hens? Don't the hounds argue against it when they hunt the fox? Did n't that rascal who stopped the Moreton coach last week argue against it? But, whether or no, the Golden Rule be good enough for me and you, and I've found it work very well on Dartmoor since me and my missus came here. And no doubt you have also."

"You don't stand a wrong from any man all the same, Trinny?"

"Right again. The man who wrongs me never has to wait very long afore I get my own back and a bit over. I do to others what I 'd have 'em do to me; but if others do different from what I do and treat me bad, then I 've got a weakness for trying to break their damned necks as quickly as can be. I follow their lead awful smart and give 'em their own again with interest, and laugh last when I can. In fact, I laugh first and last and always, for there 's laughter hid under every stone if we 've got the wit to find it. But life ban't all a bed of roses up here — I grant that — and the kindest heart have got to harden sometimes, else 't would be broke sooner or late. But be aboveboard with yourself — that 's the first thing — then it follows you 'll be straight with other folk.

That 's my first precept, Dick, and my second is this: don't hit unless you must, but if you must, then hit so hard as you know how — put every ounce in. And the last thing is, when you 've got your man down, don't jump on him."

Bolt laughed.

" Thank you for your sermon," he said, and a moment later he had mounted his pony and ridden off.

CHAPTER X

AN INCH OF BAYONET MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

NOW fate and chance combined to smother Richard Bolt's finer instincts. He fought himself and his inherited traditions; he told himself that all is fair in love; he sought at last by rapid action to distract his mind and escape through the channel of deeds from his painful reflections.

Home he did not go, but he climbed to Bair Down that he might see Charity Caunter, or at any rate ask to see her. Because right well he knew that through her led the road to the escaped prisoner of war, for whoever else might be ignorant, certain it was that she would learn where Benjamin Gun was to be found that night. One of two things must happen, so Richard argued: either the runaway, guided by past directions, would presently come to Bair Down, and there be hidden by his sweetheart, or else Charity would herself set forth by night to seek him where he might be concealed. He had argued himself into a mood wholly antagonistic to Gun by the time that Bair Down was reached, for he assured himself again and again that but for the American, Cherry would long since have been his betrothed. He told himself also that to countenance the existing engagement was to do profound dis-service to the girl; and whatever his own fate might be, he held himself now faced with the imperative duty of keeping these two

apart, for the maiden's ultimate welfare and salvation.

He was quite affirmed in this resolve when he arrived at the farm and felt glad when Charity herself opened the door to him. She met him with friendship and bade him alight from his pony and come in.

"Why, Dick! 'T is n't often we see you up here. Father will be pleased to have a tell, for he always counts you among his friends. What brings you?"

"To bid you bolt your doors to-night. Another prisoner has escaped, and goes free for the moment. So like as not he 'll come this way and seek where food and drink may be found. He 'll be hunted hard — you can take con in that, for these constant escapes have stung the guard into fury, and the prisoners are laughing at 'em."

He had watched her narrowly as he spoke, and saw her bosom jump. But her voice was level and her eye steady when she answered him.

"Three golden sovereigns for the man that catches him," she said. "But I hope he 'll get off — and so do you, Richard?"

"Nay, nay; don't think it. However, 't is no business for a quiet maiden. Oh, Cherry, Cherry, would to God these evil wars had never happened, for then you had never met the man!"

She grew red in the failing light.

"Say not that," she answered. "Had I not met him, I should never have known love. And what else in life can be named beside that?"

His mood changed, and he prepared to depart. "You fool yourself and he fools you. It is a lie and a sham, and he loves you for what he can get — not for yourself. Be sane; use the wits that God has given you. What on

earth can come of such a mad-cap matter? And be it as it will, Charity, I warn you I am against you. For your good I speak it — for your future good and salvation I am against him and shall spare no time nor trouble nor sweat to prevail against him."

"'T is you that fool yourself, Richard," she answered. "What do you seek and hope from this? Has life turned you, that were brave and true, into a coward? I think it has. But I pray you may become a man again and fight fair. Woe to the love that makes a man a coward and poisons all that was good and sweet in him!"

"You ever misunderstand me," he answered, "and once I cared; now I care no more. Hate me and welcome, and say vile things against me; I can rise above them. I 'll save you from that man if I die for it!"

"Have a care," she answered. "He is well used to fighting, and fears not bloodshed. Do not tempt him too far; do not seek to come between him and — and what is the joy of the world to him. You will rue it, Richard, if you do."

"We shall see who is to suffer. I at least have reason and common-sense upon my side."

"And Ben has me!"

He left her then, while yet his temper was under control. But his heart stormed, and his human passions awoke raw and primitive under these provocations. He desired to meet Gun hand to hand, fight him, conquer him, and give him up, a beaten man, to the soldiery. What might happen afterwards he neither knew nor cared. All he desired was a fair encounter, wherein neither might be said to start with any sort of advantage. In his heart was a primal, starving lust to meet his rival without other weapons than his fists, to enjoy the glory of battle, to

suffer and give blows and batterings, to crush and overcome the other, to stand triumphant above his prone body and win the satisfaction of the conquering male. Charity he forgot in the mental hurricanes and convulsions that now burst upon his storm-foundered spirit. To be face to face with Gun was all that he wanted; for the rest he was prepared to trust his own right arm. "Let the battle go to the strong," he thought; "let might and right be o' one side for once."

Bolt made as though returning to his home, but he did not return. It was now dusk and, having left Bair Down, he dismounted, loosed his pony, and let it run. He knew the creature's instinct was unfailing, and that it would trot home to Dart Hollow like a dog. For himself, he retraced his steps and climbed to a stony knoll above the road to Bair Down. From this point, while hidden surely enough in a clitter of rocks, he could guard the road and observe the farm. He threw down litter of bracken for his body, reclined in a comfortable position, and waited, with a wild beast's patience, to mark whether Charity came down from her home, or Gun appeared and went up to it.

The night was fine and still, for the wind had died down and the sky grown clear. A hunter's moon ascended presently, stripped off her earth-born garments of ruddy light, decreased in vastness of size as she increased in brilliancy, and then sailed, all radiant silver, over the dark peace of the wilderness. Dor-beetles boomed, and their drowsy hum waxed and waned in the watcher's ear; a white owl, swift and silent on silver wings, swept by him, alighted on a tree, and uttered its nightly cry; afar off on the heights a fox barked. Bair Down farmhouse, sunk to a smudge of gloom against the starry sky,

flashed with an occasional twinkle of light carried now to this casement, now to another; and below, the kitchen window emitted a steady illumination. Then, as the hours passed, Bolt left his post, climbed to the farm again, crept over the kale garden, that lay outside the lighted window, and peeped therein. Jacko Caunter, his wife and daughter, sat peacefuly together. The farmer was smoking; his women plied their needles.

A dog barked, and jumped at his chain before the door, and Mr. Caunter started up and took his gun from a rack above the mantel-shelf. Bolt retreated again swiftly, and returned to his place, while another hour stole away and heavy dews glimmered under the moon. Then the farm lights vanished from below and shone briefly above before disappearing altogether. The watcher waited with tightened muscles, for he believed the time was now at hand when he and his rival must meet and settle their quarrel. But no sign of Benjamin Gun rewarded his long vigil. Another hour passed before the situation changed and then, at last, light, swift footsteps fell upon his ear. It was Charity, not her lover, who approached. A gleam like a dancing Jack-o-lantern flashed far off, then came nearer, and passed swiftly some twenty yards from the man's hiding-place. He saw the girl with a horn lantern in one hand and a little basket in the other. She glimmered past; then, where a gate separated the path from the high-road, she extinguished her light, hid it in the hedge, and hastened away without it.

Under the moon Cherry's red cloak was grey, and the watcher had some difficulty in keeping her in sight without alarming her. Once, indeed, the noise of his feet stopped her own; she stood intent, looked round about her in the moonlight, and listened for a repetition of the

sound. But he crouched to the earth and, guessing that she had heard no more than an echo of her own footfall, the girl proceeded.

Toward Prince Town she hastened, and Richard Bolt followed her.

Through half a league of misty silence and winding ways, now where stepping-stones led over a bog, now where a little bridge spanned a river, they passed, and Charity went very swiftly. Toward the War Prison she proceeded; then turned away before she reached the grim circumference of the outer wall, and keeping far beyond sight of any sentry, reached at length a great black shadow that the new church threw upon a lonely space. She rested here awhile under the square tower lifting starward, while Richard, hidden behind a baulk of timber fifty yards distant, waited and marvelled why she came hither. For what should the runaway be doing at the very jaws of the War Prison? She moved presently, and her next action served still more greatly to amaze the watcher. For Charity proceeded to the skeleton of the rectory house standing in its forest of scaffold poles. She crept about the place for a little while, satisfied herself that it was wholly deserted, then reached the foot of a ladder that rose to the unfinished walls above, climbed it quickly, and disappeared. Now she was no longer visible from beneath, but Richard knew that she was safe and suspecting that she had ascended for some promised direction or letter, came closer, moved in the shadows, and presently stood concealed not fifteen yards from the foot of the ladder. Here patiently he kept guard, knowing that she must return by the way that she had come.

Meantime, concealed from the man below, with beating

heart did Charity indeed seek for a sign. The finished brickwork of the day before rose in front of her, and along the courses at the height of her waist she ran her eyes with most meticulous care. At the side of the chimney-breast she stopped and uttered a sharp sigh of triumph, for the thing she sought was shining in the moonlight under her gaze, and the secret mark of the letter, long since stamped upon her heart, confronted her. There it flashed — very small, but very white and clear on the red brick — a star between two stripes:

Scarcely daring to breathe, the girl lifted her hand, tapped faintly, and listened. For a moment came no sound; then a muffled answering tap rewarded her.

Benjamin Gun had been carefully built into a chamber fashioned within the thickness of the wall. His mates worked swiftly and well, and when their day's labour was ended Ben found himself safely immured where only solid masonry was supposed to exist. Small holes for breathing were made and one brick had been indicated by a private sign. It was here that Gun's accomplice would have to begin the task of liberating him, and now the marked brick mysteriously moved out of its place toward Charity. She lifted it from the wall and set it silently down on the floor of the scaffold. Then man and woman attacked the green mason's work of the previous day and with swiftness and silence laid bare the hollow, wherein the sailor was hidden, like a nut in its shell.

Gun broke the bricks out of the mortar and handed them to Charity, while she piled them at her feet. At length his head and breast appeared, followed by his arms. These shot out to her and hugged her tenderly; but she nearly screamed a moment later, for blood as well as blushes dyed her cheek.

"What 's happened; what 's happened to 'e? Be you sick?" she whispered; but he only bade her work on.

"Get me out of this and away, and I 'll tell you after. And if you have brought a drop of drink, for the Lord's love let me have it," he answered.

She gave him a flat bottle from her basket, and he received it thankfully.

The moon, now at its zenith, flooded the scene with cold white light, that seemed prisoned in a mesh of black shadows cast from the network of the scaffolding. Bolt, below, waited with increasing wonder as to the cause of Charity's delay; then still greater amazement overtook him and he fell backward, almost doubting the evidence of his senses, for the ladder creaked, heavy feet slowly descended, and Richard saw, not the lithe, strong figure of the girl, but a male giant come down from aloft. Slowly and feebly he crept, and placed both feet on each rung in turn. So an old, feeble man might have descended, and Bolt marvelled as to what accident had overtaken his enemy. Curiosity was quickly gratified, for Charity Caunter followed close after her liberated friend and when they were both come to the ground, he spoke to her.

"'T is like this, my pretty heart. One of them derned lobsters prodding the brickwork with his steel found me out and put a good inch or more of bayonet through my shoulder. Twice he thrust, and twice he stabbed. Let

me sit and rest for five minutes; then I make shift to crawl along the way you lead. But I 'm terrible groggy on my pins and I 've lost a barrel of blood. You must get me the shortest way to the hiding-place you 've planned, and I 'll soon be a man again."

He was very weak, and his voice alone proclaimed it. His right arm was red to the hand, where much blood had dripped in the darkness from two clean incised wounds above his armpit. Charity did her best to succour him and was thankful to find that he bled no more. Then she helped him to his feet, and he put one arm over her shoulder and leaned heavily upon her. Thus slowly through the inky shadows were they about to creep away together, when out leapt Richard Bolt from the darkness, and shouted with a voice that made night shiver.

"Stand there, in the King's name!"

A moment later he had run forward and confronted them. But any battle under the circumstances was impossible, and Gun knew it.

"Can't stand, matey — no, not in the King's name, nor any other. There ain't a spunk of fight in me — Why, 't is my old pal, Master Bolt of Dart Hollow! Again we meet, and again we can't set to! There 's no luck for us. Waal — see here — all the driving force hev poured out o' me through these pricks in my shoulder. But I can talk, though I can't fight. Don't come betwixt us now, Master Bolt. I — I —"

He reeled, and subsided on a block of stone. The huge man was so faint that a child could have bound him.

"You 've followed me, Richard; you 've dogged me all these hours! But surely now — surely you 've got a heart? You always told me you had."

But Bolt ignored the girl's speech.

"Peace," he said, "and get you home. This be no place for you." Then he turned to Gun and spoke.

"I 'm sorry to God for myself that you can't fight — not for you. I wanted to trounce you black and blue, man to man, afore this here giglet wench, and show her which is the better, but now —"

"Lemme go free, farmer, and I swear before the Throne that I 'll fight you fair and square this day fortnight! For my liberty I 'll fight you when I 've got back my lost blood again; and if you whip me, you shall take me to prison like a lamb. Who can say fairer than that?"

Unfortunately for her lover, Charity spoke. She was distracted, baffled, bitterly angered against the man who had done this thing.

"You'll get but three pounds if you take him, Richard Bolt; you shall have five if you 'll spare him! Aye, five you shall have to let my man bide free."

The victor read deepest offence into this speech, and turned furiously upon Charity; but he checked himself and spoke to the escaped prisoner.

"List to her tongue and be warned," he said. "And now come! In the cachot you sleep to-night, if I 've got to carry you there; and mark my words: you 'll thank me some day for your salvation. Better stone walls a few months longer than the martyrdom of this cruel woman's tongue for ever. You 're too good a man to owe your safety to that treacherous minx there! I know her better than you do."

Even as he spoke, in his senseless rage, he felt that his last hope was ruined for ever. But her words had wakened a fiend in the frantic man, and his self-control was gone. He turned to Charity now, and shouted so

that harsh echoes woke in the unfinished walls about them.

"Get you gone, you evil thing, or I 'll not answer for myself!"

Gun, guessing that Charity was in danger, prayed her to depart.

"Don't flout him; don't answer him, my pretty bird. He 's done us this time, but no matter. Our turn presently. He 's had it down on me for many a day, and now he can drive it home. Come on, lad! And you must lend me your shoulder, I guess, for the red-coats hev given me a shrewd dig, though they don't know it."

He rose, and put his arm round Bolt's neck, while Charity Caunter, her heart frozen, stood without a word, and watched them go. Then she tottered, fell forward, and fainted; but only Richard Bolt saw her fall, and he said nothing.

Half an hour later, Dr. Magrath, of blessed memory in the War Prison, was attending to the injured sailor, and Richard, his night's work nearly done, went on his way.

His passion was spent, and he shuddered, for the Dead-Sea fruit of his action made him feel sick. His thoughts were with Charity, and he prepared to hasten back to her, that he might see her home and offer atonement for his anger.

A turnkey overtook him at the gates.

"Here 's your money," he said, and handed the farmer three sovereigns.

But when he was gone Bolt, feeling the gold sticky with blood, flung it back into the prison, far over the inner wall.

"Let 'em lighten some poor devil's heart when the

dawn comes," thought he to himself. "Mine will never be light no more."

Then he hastened back to the unfinished buildings and stood at the spot where Charity had staggered and fallen. But the place was deserted, and he could see no sign of the girl.

A dim premonition of dawn already trembled in the upper air, and the moon began to set, and loomed again through the atmosphere of earth. Its ruddy colour reminded Bolt of the stains on his prisoner's breast and hands. He sat down where Benjamin had sat, and saw again the great, forlorn, wounded figure, weak as a baby, yet still cheerful and trusting to the future. He considered what that day had meant to the lovers — its dawn of hope, its agony of suspense, his wound, and the subsequent crushing catastrophe that tore to tatters their dreams of happiness. He measured his work, and in the gathering icy purity of the morning light he felt remorse like a knife at his heart. Shame was strangling him. He looked at the scaffold poles and ropes and ladder. In his mind there rose a dark temptation to hang himself.

CHAPTER XI

A HEART IS GIVEN FOR A HEART AFTER THE IMMEMORIAL PLAN

A HORROR of great darkness had descended upon the home of the Godolphins, and none might lighten it. For Felix had taken Sir Archer at his word. He was gone, and since his departure not the least rumour of his actions reached the father's ears. But there came very definite news from a source beyond question to Miranda, and she saw a letter from Felix. It was not written to her, but to one who now meant very much to her.

The girl's position had become thrilling enough, and not only did the future of Felix cause her acute sorrow, but her own was full of anxiety and sweet mystery. The course of love ran smoothly in the main, and her heart told her that Robert Burgoyne only wanted opportunity to declare his worship; but the future of such an attachment, surveyed from the point of view of her own family, seemed hopeless indeed. Her eyes had been opened to her father's nature, and she regarded with terror his obdurate and inflexible attitude in the matter of his only son. Felix, indeed, by his defection had awakened instincts in his father that happier circumstances might have left to sleep for ever. Fate had hit the old man hard, and he answered with hardness. "I care not," he said, when his daughter and his brother spoke with him

concerning Felix; "I care not whether he be alive or dead. He has ceased to be my flesh and blood. I have torn him out of my heart and would hear of his destruction to-morrow with indifference. That is no figure of speech, Septimus: it is the truth. I will go further; I will affirm most solemnly that I should welcome his end, for he is the avowed foe and opponent of all that I hold most dear, all that I have fought for and suffered for. He is an enemy of the State, a friend of the State's enemies. He has, by some cursed trick of atavism, evaded the obligation of honour and of his birth. He has turned back into the past history of our race for a remote ancestor, and favoured the only rogue who is known to have sprung from Godolphin seed. I mean our grandfather's younger brother."

"And yet, in some mistaken eyes, he was accounted the noblest of our race," answered Septimus. "He fought and died for liberty, as he conceived it."

"And what right had he to conceive anything at all? What right hath the cadet branch of a noble race to set forth and expand in its own depraved pattern, when for model there groweth the parent trunk and master bough? Shall the child know better than his parent? And whither will these pestilent ghosts and jack-o'-lanterns take the man? Liberty and freedom and equal rights, forsooth! It is as though we stood up in the face of the Almighty and challenged His attention and cried to Him that the world was built on a wrong pattern! The lightning from heaven may well be my son's answer. He stands beyond hope of salvation. He is lost."

"Say not that, dear brother," urged the clergyman. "'T is not for a whole-hearted Christian to think anything so terrible. For him, too, the Light shines, and if

he has to pass through danger and darkness before he can see that Light — what then? 'T is only the fate of many noble natures."

"Plead not for him," answered the other. "He hath with devilish purpose blown out the Light. He was born to possess it. It pleased God to give him parents who were of the salt of the earth. He came into a goodly heritage; he was destined to rule and support the tradition of his class and stand for a model and a master to the masses of the people. And what do we find? A bird who fouls his own nest! A fool who flouts Nature's own law and cries for the moon. 'Equality' he calls it — a chimera of madmen and a plot of knaves, who seek, in the chaos sprung from this scarecrow of a creed, their own advancement. These rebels plan to climb into power and call their ladder 'Equality'! Let the gallows be their portion. Let the gallows claim even my son, since he is grown a traitor to his King and his Christ."

"Not that! Not that, father! You are not fair," Miranda cried. "Your grief has made you lay more to his charge than is right or just. My brother's purposes are noble. He suffers to see the sorrows of men and the cruelty and evil — "

"Have done!" her father answered. "And seek not to support him by one word, or I 'll disown thee also! May God so deal with me! Miranda, be staunch to me. Do not you, too, waver; for without you my joy in life were gone, and I should not want to live longer. Trust me to know best. Have I not fought for my faith?"

He was much moved, and his daughter hastened to him and put her arms round him. But, unseen and unguessed by the fierce old man, her heart sank within her and her spirit sighed.

The outlook was grey and grim for a young hopeful creature hovering on the threshold of her life's romance; but Miranda, too, was a Godolphin. Unconsciously to her belonged the spirit of the race, and her sense of justice was little likely to crumple up before her father. She loved him well enough; she had imagination, could see his point of view, and allow for the fact that his soldier brain was incapable of looking at life save through military spectacles. But with the spirit proper to young and noble minds, she had her own wider outlook, deplored the narrow fetters of her father's thinking, and deeply sympathized with her misguided brother. Instinct told her that she would ere long be sympathizing with herself also; for the future, albeit lit by a steadfast beacon of love, promised to lead through dark places.

For the time she put her fears away, forgot herself, and fought to satisfy and soothe her father. Hers was the gentle voice, the touch, the humour to win him. He worshipped her, saw her mother reflected in her, and was very jealous, after the experience of his son, to find no taint in his daughter's mind.

So the days passed, and, at length, after some harsh words that stung Miranda into sharp retort and terrified her father, he issued the order that his son's name should be banished from every lip at Prince Hall.

"He is dead," declared Sir Archer bitterly. "For all honest purposes, my son is dead, and I will that his name die also. Let it be anathema, banned, forgotten. Only so can peace dwell in this house. Henceforth no more of him."

None questioned the edict. Indeed, the old man's brother welcomed it and hoped that with silence and no

further fret of words, time might bring anodyne and events soften the father's mind and purpose.

The Reverend Septimus was, moreover, deeply interested elsewhere, and chance, cruel in some directions, was kind in others. Thus, while Miranda felt little hope of ever winning Sir Archer's countenance to the precious thing hid in the future for her, she was favoured in details of the romance, and able to win a privilege of all others least to have been expected. Robert Burgoyne still worked at the interior of the church of St. Michael and All Angels, now fast reaching completion, and when her uncle, as often happened, walked or rode up to Prince Town to give certain directions and mark the progress made, his niece went with him. The clergyman's private munificence contributed to the cost of the sacred fane, and already he contemplated its completion and dedication with keen satisfaction.

Thus Miranda saw Burgoyne not seldom for half an hour at a time, and the progress of their love-making was fairly obvious to everybody but her uncle himself. He, good man, lacking experience of the passion, but entertaining a high opinion of the young gentleman from Vermont, was well pleased that he should engage Miranda in conversation and improve her mind. Indeed, he much regretted the impossibility of a closer acquaintance; but his brother's views were only too pronounced upon such a subject, and Uncle Septimus exercised worldly wisdom in dwelling but little at home on the subject of his niece's conversations with the American. As for Miranda, her father's temper had driven her unwillingly upon something akin to prevarication. At first, indeed, she was open and even enthusiastic about Burgoyne, his bravery, and the many subjects of interest

he discussed. But when she found Sir Archer grew impatient and at last declared his desire to hear no more of the subject, she desisted, and kept her own counsel.

There came a day when the girl and her uncle rode to the church with fair linen that she had worked for the holy table. There were but few present on this occasion, and while the clergyman spoke with a chaplain from the War Prison the lovers had leisure for a long and private talk. A premonition that the day held mighty things had dawned in Miranda's spirit when she woke; and the event proved her not mistaken. Burgoyne was in a light mood at first, and for a time avoided the vital subjects at his own heart. But his banter concealed much.

"We always know when your arms have had a reverse," said he, laughing, "because our keepers show their ill-humour by treating us with greater severity. 'T is a mean way to retaliate for defeat; but they are mean men, and your country should have trusted us, as honest folk in pawn to honest brokers. Our agent is little to brag about. He fled the prisons in a panic terror when he heard how the smallpox was loose like a lion among us; but his clerk — one Williams — is a braver man. We have had new shoes and stockings, and a shirt apiece since last I joyed to see you."

"You are cruel thin," she said. "I would it were in my power to — to — "

"Make me fatter?"

He looked round about him, then approached her.

"You can do that — since joy doth put flesh on a man's bones quicker than food. And joyful I am to think of you and breathe your precious name. And I dwell in the seventh heaven on such red-letter days as this, when I cast eyes on you and — and —" He broke off and

looked into her eyes. They were fixed upon him, and he saw that she was moved. For a moment he fought himself and his strong emotions. He brushed his hand over his eyes, shook the hair from his forehead, and smiled. "What stuff is this that a poor chained wretch is babbling to a free maiden! Matter for laughter, I doubt."

"I love to listen to you," she answered.

"And well I know it. Believe me, I have news for you, but my tongue ran away. We are all excited to-day. The cartel ship, *St. Philip*, takes a hundred men from here. They proceed to her at Dartmouth, and will join the crew of the late United States brig, *Argus*, and sail for home."

"Reports of peace swell every London paper."

"I know it, and I believe them. 'T is time, and more than time. Here, at least, trouble breeds too fast. Our guards — officers and men — are disaffected with their government, and indeed I hear 't is a common thing in your army to-day. They clamour for peace and clamour for pay. A rich man, like myself, has most of them in the hollow of his hand if it pleased him. We have taught them no little, and they feel friendly enough, but they are sternly forbid from headquarters to show their friendship. With the advent of the cold weather we applied for the privilege of keeping fire among us. The French prisoners were allowed to do so; but we have been refused! Yet fire in such a place as this means to the feeble the difference 'twixt life and death."

"'T is monstrous that they treat you so ill."

"We must cultivate to be insensible of such things. They are not all as fortunate as I. I have a fire that burns night and day, whether I will or no."

"Lord, Mr. Burgoyne! How are you so privileged?"

"It woul be hard to answer that question from your lips," he replied. For a moment more he struggled to deny himself, and then he yielded and spoke. "'T is vain I seek to muzzle myself and talk of nothing. For all 's nothing — in earth and sea — but you. Oh, Miranda — wonderful indeed above all wonders — Miranda — magic Miranda — I love you with all my heart and all my spirit!"

She looked at him, almost frightened, and her face grew white.

"Can you — is it in reason even to whisper it? Can you care for me? Give me one little, little ray of hope to hang over my prison here, like a star, till I am free! Can you love me, or is it madness and insanity begot of my sleepless brooding, that I should dare to dream of it? Forgive me for lifting my eyes to you; I — I will not ask again if I have shocked or offended. Well I know how vain it must sound — how futile, how hopeless. And yet if you but echoed it — no matter how faintly, Miranda; if you could feel that some day — far hence, when you knew me better and understood, and had heard my hopes and fears and desires — that some day you might be able to hear my name with happiness, and touch my hand with trust? . . ."

He broke off, and looked in her eyes. They stood behind a pillar, unseen, and she, fearless, reckless, throbbing with fierce love of him, left the man in little doubt of her answer.

"You know —" she said. "You know that I love you, and if peace doth take years, yet I shall love and wait. 'T is my father, not I, you must make love to. Alas, poor stupid maiden that I am, I gave you not even

the joy of a struggle to win me: but he — he is made of sterner stuff. 'T will tax your courage and your patience to bring him upon our side, or make him see as I do."

He drew her to him then, and reverently put his arms about her. Then, fired at touch of each other, they embraced with passion, and kissed each other hungrily. The undying torch was ablaze, and the future, that had been so restless and troubled for them both; the future, that had kept them waking through many a long dark night, wondering, hoping, fearing, longing for day to bring them again within sight and sound of each other — that future now dawned gracious out of this glorious present, eased their panting hearts with its noble promise, and made the world of woe a world of joy.

In pure and simple radiance of soul they held each other's hands, speechless, for a little while. Then sorrow overtook Miranda; tears came to her grey eyes, and she lifted them brimming to him.

"Darkness looks the darker against this glorious light of ours," she whispered. "I did not know life could make a girl so happy as I am — standing a-tremble before my loved one now; but there is a sorrow that this unbounded joy of mine cannot make lighter. There is a great grief that all of my house share. Our days are clouded, and we go in fear and terror. My father is crushed under the weight of it; I cannot lift my head when I think of it."

"You are speaking of your brother, Felix," said Burgoyne quietly.

She started with amazement.

"Indeed I am; but how know you that?"

"I knew him. You will remember long ago — the first day I saw you, Miranda, and my heart knelt down and

worshipped, and said its prayers to you — that he came with you and was angered at the bad taste of our bully, the Commandant. Since then he has gone far, it seems, and expressed his sympathy with more courage than wisdom. Yet I love him for his own sake, if I did not love him for yours."

"Love him always," she begged, very earnestly. "For the time is coming when he will stand in sore need of men's love. Few will there be to love him long. Tell me now, how comes it that you know of our tribulation?"

"I guess at it for more reasons than one. Your brother, before he fell out with those at home, had entered into a conspiracy of a mad sort with one or two hot-heads here. Think not that I frowned upon the intention, for 't was all of a piece with his fearless love of justice and liberty, and hatred of tyranny and wrong. But his plot, so to call it, was rash and foolish. By no possibility could the scheme have come to good. There was a time when none worked harder than I to help my friends and neighbours out of the War Prison; but that time is past. We failed in our great enterprise, and God knows that for my own sake I am glad enough that we failed. Had we succeeded, I should never have set eyes on you, Miranda But we failed, and now, with the peace in sight, strive for order rather than disorder, and feel that our ends cannot be gained by any further disobedience. Not so think some, however, and your brother is hungering still to break open this trap and set the caged creatures free. He has friends — so says his letter ——"

"A letter — Robert!"

His eyes flashed at the name, and he broke off.

"How precious it sounds to me, how sweet! But I 'll wager strange enough to you, Miranda?"

She shook her head.

"Not so," she whispered back. "I 've spoke it in secret a thousand times! I 've called you 'Fighting Bob' out loud, when none could hear!"

"You make me mad!" he answered. "You are an angel out of heaven!"

"The letter from Felix?"

"It came three days agone — very strangely, through a market man I know not. He brought food from a far-distant farm, it seems, and the turnkeys were in doubt to admit him; but the creature bribed them with a piece of gold, 't is whispered. At any rate he took his place — a shock-headed, strange thing, who rolls his speech in a hollow palate and seems rather short of wits. He asked a sailor for me, and was referred to one of my mates. Andy Midge came acquainted with him, and before he departed, after under-selling the folk, and getting into hot water with them, he conveyed this letter."

"Is he well? Is he safe?" asked Miranda.

"Both, for certain. Well and safe, and powerful too, for he speaks of his friends, and proposes that he shall work with us from outside the War Prison, strike simultaneously, and help us to free ourselves! 'T is a crack-brained scheme at this stage of affairs — possible enough, no doubt, if his aid be as strong as he declares — but the idea is vain, in sight of the peace. He puzzles me, for what force is at his command to surprise the guard, overpower it, and throw open the outer gates, while we break down the inner ones? Know you of any among your brother's friends who would lend themselves to such a piece of folly?"

"No, indeed. At best, he had few friends. He despised our gentlemen round about."

"I can grieve very truly for you. My heart went out to him when he was here. The injustice and cruelty of the world have turned his brain a little. At any rate this would seem to say so. His burning sense of justice hath made him unjust."

"What did you do?"

"I wait for the black-browed man to send him an answer. But he has not come again. The letter, however, is ready, and one of our mess, named Charley Miller, will convey it to him, when he re-appears at market. I have written strongly, and urged your brother to abandon a plot that cannot come to good. If attempted, it might at best outlaw him for ever, at worst destroy him."

"I pray it may not be too late to save him."

Burgoyne sighed.

"My own joy makes me selfish," he answered. "'T is hard to believe that all is so ill with the world when all is so well with me. Maybe you heard that poor Ben Gun's bid for freedom came to naught?"

She nodded. "A cruel story. I had it from Cherry, his lover. Had Felix been here, he 'd have whipped that cowardly wretch who spoilt all."

"Love — love, 't was love wrecked the plot. But Ben is a giant, and will recover, I hope. There are grimmer and greater troubles than this afoot yonder. The prisoners are very sick; the men, impatient at the delay and unable to understand why peace is still unproclaimed, are ripe for mischief. This plot — this offer from outside — not a few would gladly lend it their aid. But I have kept it a secret, and, in my letter, begged Felix Godolphin, very earnestly, to abandon the enterprise. Such friendship would only defeat is own object, and perhaps end not a few innocent lives. And as for you and yours,

thankfully would I come to you and seek to help your father to see the other side. But who am I to influence him? He represents a great party in this country, and voices thousands beside himself. In his eyes America has sinned beyond the point of forgiveness or possibility of salvation. 'T is almost too much to hope that time will ever make him see differently, and it is certainly beyond my strength to make him do so. For the present you must keep our blessed secret, darling Miranda; and maybe anon, when I can leave this, then I must do what will be harder than fight the *Vermont*, and seek to win you from your father."

"Such love as ours cannot but triumph over all obstacles," she declared. "'T is an immortal thing, and we have the angels on our side!"

They parted then, for the clergyman approached.

"Right well have your compatriots done their work, Master Burgoyne," he said. "It remains only for his Grace, the bishop, to consecrate this edifice, and as soon as may be I shall invite him to appoint a date for the ceremony."

CHAPTER XII

REMORSE TAKES SHAPE OF A GREY FRIEZE COAT

BETWEEN Miranda and her uncle there were few secrets. Indeed, he stood for her father in some particulars, and upon the vital matter of her brother's affairs she spoke often with him, since the theme was no longer to be approached before Sir Archer. Afire with the mighty experience of that hour, Miranda cried for sympathy and a heart to share her joyful secret. To her uncle she therefore brought it, exploded the tremendous news on his bewildered ear, and so much amazed him that he nearly fell off his horse on their homeward way.

"This is the last straw!" he cried. "Positively, Miranda, the unspeakable and unthinkable has happened. To fall in love with that wonderful young man!"

"What more natural, Uncle Seppy? Has anybody praised him more heartily than yourself, or thought better of his parts?"

"Yes," he admitted, "'t was natural, and blind bat that I am, I should have guessed at the chance of such a thing, and taken pains to stand between you."

"You can say that, hard-hearted man!" she laughed. "You find the best and ablest lad in the world and cry his praises to me ceaselessly, and then, when my judgment jumps with yours and I love where you admire, you turn from me! Nay, Uncle Seppy, I 'll not part with

my pearl of price for you or any man. Robert Burgoyne loves me with all his heart, and I love him, and ——"

"And your father?"

"You must help me there."

The Reverend Septimus drew up his cob to give extra effect to his answer.

"Now, Miranda, for the sake of us all and the future of us all, I pray you reflect while there is yet time. Never — never was I faced with a problem where the wisdom of the serpent appeared to be more vital than at this moment. Understand me, and remember that I am one who for choice prefers and practises the harmlessness of the dove. Listen, and curb your emotions as well as you can. I am a bachelor and, if ever the fever of love flushed my cheek, it is a very long time ago, and nothing came of it. But I am a man of imagination. I have translated many of the Odes of Horace; I pride myself on an active, vivid sympathy with the young, their ambitions and idiocies. I say nothing against the news that you bring me, because, from my point of view, love is like Charity and Mercy — a thing not bound by continents nor hedged by seas. I bless your love, Miranda; I smile upon it; I hope that the Almighty, who lit this pure flame in two young bosoms, will see the mingled fires shall burn together presently for the joy of man and maid, that united in fulness of time you may help the happiness of the sad old earth, and do your best to leave it better than you found it — all that and more I say and you know I mean. May it be my happiness to unite you and put your hand in his. But — your father?"

"Thank you, thank you, you precious, darling Uncle Seppy! Since you are on our side, father will only be a question of time."

"Talk not so lightly of that. He has suffered cruelly of late, and still suffers. Providence, for reasons hidden from us, has dealt very hardly with my brother. My prayers are unanswered, my tears uncounted. Yet I will not say that neither, for prayers and tears are like the smoke of incense: it vanishes, but we may not say its fumes are wasted. To return, this staggering news must be close hid for the present. These are no times to distress your father with facts that cannot bring him anything but pain. We will keep the secret from him, and trust Heaven to give us a sign and signal, or so dispose of the future that Sir Archer and Master Burgoyne may come together in amity and understanding. It looks little likely to happen in our eyes; but if 't is well that it should be, then it will be."

"I love my father very dearly. May it not be that through my love will come his enlightenment? May it not be that Robert Burgoyne has been chosen, in his simple faith and plain speech, to show dear father that life has many sides, and other sides than his?"

The clergyman answered drily.

"With God, my child, nothing is impossible; but the Almighty hath common-sense, Miranda, and 't is not His customary way to let the boy lead the man. Such a thought savours of story-books, and not life as we know it. If the young would commend themselves to the old, then it is by deeds, not words, that they must seek to do so. Your lover, happily, is a man of deeds — otherwise his professed goodness might make the least worthy suspicious. The man of deeds, seeing Burgoyne as we see him, hearing him as we hear him, might smell a rat and suspect that he was a prig."

"Uncle Seppy, how dare you!"

"Bear with me. He is not: you and I know him for a hero. But of a hero the heroic is incessantly demanded. He cannot rest long on his laurels, or they will wither and none will renew them. . In a word — and call me cynic if you must — young Burgoyne should be unfolded in his deeds rather than his opinions and noble sentiments. Only so can Sir Archer be interested. There may be necessity for subterfuge. Alas! that a man of God should use the word. But we know that the chosen of Heaven were not above the use of cloak and mask. A dangerous subject — a dangerous subject!"

"Father would never forgive deception," she declared.

"Not deception, not deception in any literal sense. But there are innocent sleights that may be put upon a man for his good. For instance, what constitutes an American? Doth it make Master Burgoyne an American that he was born there? Seeing that he claims direct descent from a pair that sailed to the New World from Plymouth Barbican in the *Mayflower*, doth it not lie within honesty and reason to call him an Englishman?"

She laughed.

"You cunning old fox of an Uncle Seppy! But, alas! you reckon without your host. Robert will have none of that. He glories in his country. He hath risked a thousand deaths for it, poured out his vast wealth for it, sacrificed everything for it. He is an American to the heart's core and would thank you little to suggest otherwise. He is proud of his great land and has a right so to be. My friend, Charity Caunter, lies in just the same pickle with myself, for her father hates the Americans even as my father hates them."

"And what does she do?"

"For the present she is sick and unhappy, I hear,

because her Benjamin — one of my Robert's men — has been catched escaping and taken back to prison by a cruel coward called Bolt — Dick Bolt of Dart Hollow. But before things went wrong with her, she was very brave, and not a morsel afeared of the future."

"Her father?"

"Her father will have to reckon with a plucky and an obstinate daughter ere long. She told me what her Ben has told her. She said, 'Why, Mistress Miranda, the British lion ban't no stronger than the American eagle, and if my faither won't take reason from me, he 'll have to take it come presently from Benjamin Gun. He 'll teach faither not to be such a fool, for 't is only a fool would say there ban't two sides to every question!' That 's how Cherry talked."

"One can't deny the sense of it."

"And I must feel the same. Robert never had an enemy in the world — no personal enemy. How could such a man have enemies? And is dear father going to be the first? Let them but come together and father *must* see the wonderful man he is."

"Deeds — deeds!"

"May he get the chance to do them, then!" said Miranda devoutly, nor guessed how soon her hopes would be gratified; but for the present it was clear enough that her betrothal must be kept a secret.

Homeward they went, and another problem awaited the clergyman, for they had not gone far when a horseman overtook them. It was Richard Bolt, and Miranda, who knew all about the recent failure of Charity's sweetheart to escape, cast a look at the farmer which would have withered him like lightning if the fierce beauty could have brought it about."

"Cruel coward!" she cried, and then galloped forward with scorn, and left her uncle and the other together.

Bolt's face was dark. No little suffering marked it. He rode his small pony without stirrups or saddle, and his long legs nearly reached the ground on either side of it. The man was woebegone and heavily stricken. For a moment he regarded the retreating figure of Miranda. Then he spoke — in a voice that showed he had suffered grievous things.

"The young lady does well to scorn me. Scorn is my portion henceforth, and I have earned it. My sins stink in my nostrils: I am like to go mad. But you turn from no sinner. You will be patient and bear with one who has repented."

"Indeed, yes, farmer. Tell me what has fallen out. Yet I need not ask you for details. You caught one of the sailor prisoners of war and took him back to Prince Town; that much I know. There was no crime in that. It were more proper to call it your painful duty."

"'T was hate, not duty, made me give the man up. I was mad, for even in the act I knew that I doomed my last hope. And now — now — my eyes are opened, Parson Godolphin, I see the colour of the thing I did."

"So far so good, then. The man hath been given up, but not for justice. Rather that you might feed some petty spite. 'T is half the battle fought, my friend, that you confess as much to yourself and to me. You are contrite, and would seek some practical way of showing your contrition?"

"Even so, your reverence. What would you have me do? I ask you as one skilled in man's weakness."

"No need to ask of me, Richard Bolt. The case is simple enough, and He who has put sorrow into your

heart will tell you the way of atonement. Smooth or thorny, be sure that it will not be hidden, neither need you think to travel it alone. There is always a Hand to help him who boldly sets forth upon that stickle path."

"I have feared to go about my business up there."

"Then let that be your first step. The markets are thinner of late, owing to the fear of smallpox, and the prisoners cry out for green food. Go your way as usual, and, if it lies within your power to see your enemy, do so. For the rest you may trust Providence very fully to open a road before you. Heaven is ever ready to hear such a cry as yours. I will remember you in my prayers, Richard."

Cheered by these sympathetic words, Bolt went his way, did as he was bidden, took good store of kale and turnips with him on the occasion of the next prison market, and prepared to face the harsh words that he knew would hurtle about him.

His ears soon tingled indeed, for he had to do with reckless and bitter men, who were goaded to desperation by their own cruel lot, and found no pity to spare for another. Andy Midge, Seapach, Miller, and Wood rated him like harpies. They cursed him for his treachery to their unlucky partner, and he learned that Benjamin Gun, so soon as Dr. Magrath pronounced his wound healed and his health restored, had been cast into a cachot to endure his punishment of cold and starvation. He languished now on bread and water in a stone cell, with an iron grating for window and granite for bed; and he won no help but hope and his own unconquerable pluck and patience.

"You — you — a lop-sided, misbegotten dog like you

— to come between the man and liberty!" cried Seapach, shaking his fist under Bolt's nose, as he returned with his mates from the stone-mason's work, to find Richard in his usual place at market. "You dare to show your cut-throat muzzle here! You low down, cussed coward! Why are you not fighting for your one-horse country instead of snooking round here, harrying a beaten man and bullying a poor, derned female into her grave?"

"And her hating your black shadow, like every other Christian creature do!" cried little Johnny Wood.

"Call it a man!" chimed in Charles Miller. "'T is a scarecrow, a bloodless, bowelless, heartless horror without so much as a soul to damn. 'T would foul the earth if they buried you in it. I 'd sooner have smallpox than touch you with the end of my finger. Why didn't the woman scratch your eyes out?"

"And I 'd rather starve than touch his stuff, for like enough he 's put poison in the turnips," said Seapach. "Judas be a straight man compared to this man."

They heaped vituperation upon Bolt, who endured it meekly enough; then came one or two sailors from another mess and argued for the farmer.

"'T is all very well, but he done it for hate, not money, and the turnkeys can bear witness that he flung his cash back in the prisons. And 't was Harry Bunker as found one of the three sovereigns: and where a gal was concerned any other chap would have done the same," said a tall American with his arm in a sling.

"For hate I did do it," declared Bolt, "but I 'm sorry now I did, and 't is my hope to show Gun that I be sorry. And he 'll not bear malice against me, knowing well what made me do it."

But while actions so contrary were beyond the philosophy of Miller, Midge, or Wood to explain, Seapach abated of his venom and spoke.

"'T is this way," he explained, with the gusto of a sea lawyer on a knotty point. "Firstly he hungered for the money; then, when he 'd given back his fellow-man to this hell, his gorge rose, and the money grew foul as the thirty pieces. But he 's a Judas for all that, for did n't Judas do the same? And I 'd sooner eat rats than buy his food — God 's my judge!"

Others, however, were of a contrary opinion, or else indifferent. The cabbages and turnips meant more to most of them than any question of conscience. Purchasers appeared for Bolt, and his stall was cleared as swiftly as the rest. Indeed, an incident at this juncture threatened to make general anger among the Americans, for a man appeared at the outer gates with a full basket, but he was not allowed to enter and take his place with the rest.

The beetle-browed Kek, Mother Brimblecombe's son from Metherill, appeared, and Miller, who recognized him, waited with impatience for him to enter; but Kek was not suffered to do so, and a letter from Burgoyne to Felix Godolphin, which had long awaited the messenger's advent, could not be delivered. The stranger appeared to be suspected; moreover, the market folk entered a loud protest at his re-appearance, for he had undersold them and disturbed their business on his previous visit.

Protesting, and mumbling incoherently, Kek was denied admission, and accordingly departed, in a very savage humour, without the letter that he knew awaited him; but it mattered little enough, for Burgoyne had

offered no encouragement to the proposals of Felix and his friends.

When market was done, Bolt packed up his trestles according to rule and bestowed them near at hand beside the wall of the cachot — the prison within a prison, which occupied a corner of the yard. Here for a moment he was hidden from the eyes of the sentries; but a voice reached him as he prepared to depart and, looking upward, he saw one of the little grated windows of the cachot and a white face at it.

"Whist, farmer! I 've looked for you these many weary days and here you are at last! Just one word. How is she faring? If you 're a man, tell me that."

"She 's ill, Benjamin Gun."

"Oh, my God! And you had the heart! And you think 't was love. 'T was hate — bitter hate — not love. If she dies, 't is you have killed her and I 'll make you pay the price if I 've gotten a century to wait first!"

The other replied in low tones.

"Cease your railing, else they 'll hear us. I 've mourned very bitter for the thing I 've done. 'T was a hookem-snivey deed and I 'm cruel shamed to think upon it. She 's right to hate me, and so be you. 'T is over now — my eyes be opened. I went afore her and told her that I can't live without her, Benjamin Gun."

"And what said she?"

"She said that I might die then, and the sooner the better. She 'll never look upon my face again."

"Is n't that enough for you?"

"Nay. I 'll make her love me yet! There 's a way, Benjamin, and 't is the Lord have showed it to me."

"Better keep the name of the Lord off your lips."

"I 'm right, I tell you. A wiser than me told me as I

should see, if I put myself on the road to see. And I do see. She 'll love me yet."

"Never, farmer. She 's not the sort to change, and if I rot away here and die, her love 's mine all the same. She 'd love my tombstone better far than your carcase. She 'd love the shadow of me better than the substance of you. And 't is little more than a shadow that she 'll hev to look at now for a while. But you — your light 's out. No decent gal would suffer you after that night's work. I never thought 't was in a man to do a thing like that — even an Englishman."

"Leave it — leave it! Who so strong but he falls? Don't stand between me and atonement. Don't forbid me to make it good. I want to be your friend. I can be. There 's great thoughts and hopes moving in my mind."

Gun shook his head.

"A wolf-friend you! I 'll not trust you. I 'll not believe you. I 've been sick too. You can tell her that if you 're honest. And you can tell her 't was not the smallpox but that dig in the shoulder that let all my blood run out. Tell her I 'm jolly as a sand-boy again and they 've put me in this ice-house for a month on bread and water — just to cool my high spirits."

"Cold, I 'll warrant?"

"So 't is then — the only thing I can't abide. A tidy chap — the Lord will remember him — have pitched in a truss of hay to put between my bones and the granite floor; and my mess-mates fling in a bone or a bit of green stuff through the window sometimes when the sentries look t' other way. So I keep alive; but the cold o' nights is death and leaves me like a frozen blue-bottle when morning comes. Well they know how to punish us for trying to run away! I hope when you go to

hell, farmer, you 'll freeze for it. 'T is a lot worse than roasting."

Bolt was looking up at the bars.

"What space is there between 'em?" he asked.

"Plenty to let Jack Frost in; not enough to let me out."

"Will you have my coat?"

"You 're the sort to jump on a man when he 's down and laugh at the beaten."

For answer Richard took off a stout grey frieze coat that he wore and handed it up to the prisoner.

In a moment it was seized and dragged between the bars of the little window.

"Even you! God 's a wonder!" cried Gun.

"I 'll help you if I can," said Bolt.

"Then help me to understand you, my lad, for I 'm derned if I do," answered the other.

"No need for that — not yet. Wait till you 're out of the dungeon again. None can do aught for you while you 're balked in that trap; but maybe, when you are free — I 've thoughts in me, I tell you. Fate be breeding in me."

"If 't is breeding warm coats for freezing backs, I 'll be patient even of Fate," answered Gun. "'Twould seem you 're in earnest and can feel for them in a tight corner. Well, that 's something. You 've warmed my skin and bones anyhow, but I 'd rather far you warmed my gal's heart. 'T is a million years since I 've heard tell about her. If you 're a friend indeed, you tell her all 's well and bid her to hope. Why have n't her mother been to market since I tried to run away?"

"The master won't let her. The smallpox have scared a lot of the market folk out of their wits."

Then a great bell rang; others came with their boards and trestles and some stared up and nodded friendship to Benjamin. An apple or two and a fat meat pasty were flung to him.

So Richard Bolt departed, and his mind was full of thoughts that leapt to take a living shape. Dark and grim showed his face as he passed out among the people; but his heart was lighter than it had been for many days.

CHAPTER XIII

FELIX GODOLPHIN FINDS HIS NEW FRIENDS LACKING ENTERPRISE

THE darkest note of despair and misery had sounded at Prince Town, and, as though to accentuate the fact, there came news of a suicide in Prison No. 5. Death, busy enough, striking to the right and left through disease and by way of privation, seemed not satisfied and turned one unhappy sailor's hand against himself.

To Placid Petersen came the dead man's friends and bade him write a tombstone verse, for Petersen was famed in this sort and had turned many a rhyme on occasion of rejoicing or sorrow.

He sat now in a corner of No. 4 with Burgoyne, Miller, and Owen Seapach beside him, and they spoke in whispers that the poet's thoughts might not be distracted. The tribulation that spread its dark wings above the prisoners at this season did not miss the little company who had fought with Burgoyne, for Thomas Midge was dead of smallpox, and the lad, Johnny Wood, lay in hospital very sick. Subdued and sad, the survivors of the *Vermont* still kept together, and Burgoyne, who was much with them, did his best to help their courage and support their hopes. Peace was near, but, even after the proclamation, he knew that there must be long delay before the thousands of prisoners could be safely dispatched to their homes in America.

For a time Petersen, happily detached from the sorrows of the hour by the bliss of creation, struggled with his verses, while the others talked about their affairs.

"Ben Gun comes out of the cachot to-morrow," said Burgoyne, "and we must give him a royal welcome and a bit of an extra feed, and we 'll broach the last bottle of brandy also. The turnkeys are getting skeary about letting it into the prisons, but I have a promise of six more bottles, though I had to pay a guinea apiece for 'em."

"'T would have been a poor lookout for our mess but for you, Cap'n," said Miller, "and I hope for one as I 'll hev the luck, some fine day, to pay back a bit of what I owe you."

"And so you will, Charley — you and Seapach and Andy Midge and the rest — all will dance at my wedding yet! And we 'll all dance at Ben's!"

"Don't you wherrit, Cap'n. You 'll get your lady presently and we'll go back home to Vermont with the drums beating. And as for Ben, him and his old enemy are thick as thieves now, and I should n't wonder if Ben will be out of prison yet afore any of us!"

"I wish 't was n't a female as he trusts to, all the same," said Seapach. "I 've gotten a proper down on females since I heard as mine hev grown tired of waiting and gone over to another chap. 'T was in the last letter that came through from my brother, the farmer up at Beaver Creek. Cuss the cat-hearted bitch — to take that clod, Ezra Winstone — a mean, stay-at-home, sleek cur, as we 'd put in the pot and cook and eat if we 'd got the maggot here!"

"Plenty more girls in Vermont, Owen," Burgoyne

said, "or maybe you 'll find a maiden at market presently, as Benjamin Gun has done. She 's the true thing, and you need n't fear for Gun."

"He 'd trust her afore he 'd trust a shining angel from heaven," said Miller.

"We most of us trust 'em — once too often," declared Seapach. "Any way, I 've had my dose. I hope she 'll give Ezra Winstone all he deserves and a bit over. And I hope as I 'll live to get back home to see it!"

Their talk drifted to other affairs, and Miller was begging Burgoyne to join them that night and watch the rat races, when Petersen spoke.

"'T is done. Not a very clever rhyme, I reckon, yet 't will serve the poor fellow as well as another, I dare say."

"Read it out, boy; I 'll wager you 've made a good job of it," said Burgoyne, and the poet, thus encouraged, recited his verses.

"First there 's the fact that John Taylor, a native of New York City, took his life in No. 5, and then I go on like this:

Whene'er you view this doleful tomb,
  Remember what you are,
And put your trust in God alone;
  Suppress that fiend, Despair.

Lo! here 's entombed a generous youth
  Despair did tempt to die;
By the rash act of suicide
  John Taylor here doth lie.

He hung himself within these walls,
  A warning may it prove:
Tho' man is wicked here below,
  Our God is just above."

"Very well wrote, Petersen. 'T is a terrible thing for certain to rush into the presence of your Maker before He bids you come," said Burgoyne. "It shall be set up over poor Taylor, and we 'll hope 't will make others beware of imitating him."

Their talk returned to Benjamin Gun, and, a day later, all hands of his little company welcomed the big sailor with three cheers when, like a ghost from the tomb, in Richard Bolt's frieze coat, he came among them again. Fresh air and exercise presently restored his mighty strength, and he gave Richard a fairly strong hand-grip when next the farmer came to market. Then their comrade and his captor were soon on the best of apparent terms — to the surprise of Andy Midge, Miller, and the others.

"Here 's your coat, pardner," began Ben on the occasion of their first meeting, "and many thanks for the loan of it. Under Providence, the thing hev saved my life against the nightly cold of that cussed den there."

He pointed to the cachot and shook his fist at it.

"Keep the coat," said Bolt. "I wish 't was powerful to ward off other ills. The smallpox is reigning still."

Ben nodded sadly.

"Too well, I know it. Death would n't come in my cachot — for fear he could n't get out again; but not a few good pals hev been carried off while I was locked up. Poor Tom Midge has turned up his toes and Johnny Wood is awful sick."

"He went last night," said Petersen, who was making some purchases at the next stall.

"Poor little monkey! Could n't Magrath save him?"

"Be sure he tried. The doctor works early and late."

"I shall miss him bad," said Benjamin. "We was

very good friends — him and me — and I knew his folk home. Way back of Cap'n Burgoyne's they lived. His father was a lumberman. Poor Johnny! He cried when he did n't draw the right spill. Little he thought how soon he 'd be free!"

Placid Petersen purchased green stuff and presently went his way. Then Gun spoke again to the farmer.

"Tell me if you can, since her mother 's not to market to-day. Tell me how Cherry 's faring, Master Bolt. Tell me truth, for I trust you."

"She 's bad."

"Not smallpox — for God's sake!"

"No — no — only a sorrow as makes her terrible gloomy and glumpy, and teaches her to hate the sight of day. She'll be better now she knows you 're free again."

"And that I 'm well and strong as a lion, and cheerful as a kitten. Get that to her, and bid her come back to market. Do that for me — man to man. I may be able to serve you some day."

"That 's not enough by all accounts. She 's ill and her pluck be dashed. I 've prayed to see her, but she won't see me no more. I 'm thinking that she 'll go down to the pit in real earnest if you bide long away."

"Go down to the pit! Sakes alive! What d' you mean by that? Die? Good powers of grace! — d' you mean die?"

"Her mother has told me. She 's lost the will to live and will soon lose the wit to. Can't eat — can't sleep — for thinking upon you and all you 've had to bear."

"Naught — naught to what others have endured. I 'm a giant of strength — they can't kill me. Oh, for the peace! Won't it never come?"

Bolt looked round him to see that no turnkey nor sentry was in earshot. He sold some eggs to a customer, then turned again to Gun.

"Ban't there no way open to make another try?"

"It grows harder and harder. Short has sacked half a dozen of his men, and the rest are difficult to tempt. They shoot at sight now. I had thought to climb and chance it; but I have n't the strength for scaling the wall yet, I reckon, let alone the wires and bells that run round it."

"See here, Benjamin Gun, will you trust me, for love of the girl?" asked Bolt abruptly. "You might say I was a wolf-friend still and feel little like trusting; but I 'm straight. I don't want nothing on this earth better than to fetch you out of here and bring you to her."

The sailor considered, but quickly made up his mind.

"For love of her I 'll trust you — and for more than that. You gave me this coat. You 've gone back on what you done. All 's fair in love. But be you in love still? If that 's so, then I 'll not trust. Because you 've got to do what love makes you do."

Richard Bolt shook his head.

"Not that way. I 'm wishful to serve her and to please her and to make her forgive me. I want her to love me instead of hate me. So, after all, you may say I 'm offering to work for selfishness. Yet you can't call it that neither. You must trust me or mistrust. I can't help you if you mistrust — nor blame you neither. She loves you and you only. She 'll look at no other human creature so long as you 're in the land of the living."

"I 'm in the land of the dying here."

"Then trust me to fetch you out of it — for her

sake. We 'll talk more of this later. We 'd better part now, or they 'll suspect. They 'll watch you double close, for certain. Next week I 'll tell you a thing or two."

And Bolt was as good as his word. Time passed; he conveyed a letter from Gun to Charity and explained his plan of escape; but the American's friends were doubtful, and most of them urged him to put no trust in the farmer.

"I see it clear enough," said Andy Midge. "The tarnal thief hev told her that you are dead, and very like showed her a mound outside there among the rest and said you were underneath it. Next thing you 'll hear is that she 's promised to marry him — to heal her broken heart."

"Of course," added Seapach. "Ain't one woman like all the rest? There 's only one pattern of soul in a woman's carcase, and that 's a lying soul. She don't want you no more. She was only making game of you. So like as not she told Bolt where you was hid. For how should he hev been there if she had n't?"

"You speak off book, pardners," answered Gun, "and you won't poison my mind agin Dick Bolt — for why? Because he 's a straight man and the proof of the pudden is in the eating. So long as the gal did n't get no news to me, you was in the right to look at farmer a bit sideways; but now I may tell you that the goose I bought with Cap'n's money last market had some things in her beside her liver and gizard. 'T is all going very well, and if some fine morning I don't come along for my rations, don't be too skeered, but just eat 'em yourselves and think I 'm over the wall and off."

"Under the wall and down, with a bullet in your belly, more like," said Seapach. "Bolt 's a derned sight

too thick with the turnkeys to be any friend of ourn."

"That 's the craft of the man," explained Gun. "He 's making friends of 'em to gain his ends. That goose had some tough guts, I promise you! Fifty feet of brass wire and a dozen big nails. Not to mention the letter I 've been spoiling for so long. And with that wire and them nails, when the proper evening comes, I can walk over the first wall as if 't was a companion ladder; and he 'll be waiting inside the outer one."

"Don't you be too cock sure," answered Andy Midge. "I would n't trust nary a mother's son who loved the same wench as me."

"'T is neck or nothing," replied Benjamin. "Better have a run for it and drop in the open, if needs must, than stop here and rot. The very food they give us tries to be free. It crawls off a man's platter."

But hope and joy of life spring unconquerable in the heart of the young, and when evening came these men, with many others like them, were killing their time as usual, and forgetting their miseries and dangers with games and amusements until the bugle should blow them to their hammocks. Gambling was the curse of the prisons, and many forlorn wretches, oblivious of the fact that they played with their lives for counters, would dice or bet away their rations, the coats off their backs, and the list and wood shoes off their feet. Thus handicapped against their dangerous environment of harsh weather and poor food, they risked disease and death for their folly and threw themselves open to the dire perils that haunted the great limbo. They would bet on anything and everything — from the number of curls in the doctor's wig to the steps taken by the sentry on the wall from mark to mark; from the Christian name

of the next man to die of smallpox to the number of feathers on a fowl's wing. But Burgoyne had arrested this passion for play as far as he and other leaders were able to do so, and in the little company with which we are concerned no gambling now took place, though Seapach gratified his propensity elsewhere unknown to the rest. Rat racing continued to be their chief sport, but little beyond bones and buttons changed hands over that.

Nor was play confined to the prisoners. The turnkeys and military guards found time heavy on their hands also, and not a man among them was more addicted to cards than Sergeant Bradridge himself.

Upon a night in mid-winter the sergeant found himself at the end of a run of ill-luck with his next week's pay heavily mortgaged. He rose therefore from his seat at the guard-room table, used some crooked words, and vowed, not for the first time by many, that he would never touch a card again. Then he left the company, drew on his great coat, and walked beyond the prison gates to cool his heat and calm his anger before turning in. Slant light from a rising moon peeped here and there to throw the grated patterns of the iron gates upon the earth and walls; while beyond, rising and falling every way, rolled the immensity of the Moor to its lonely pinnacles and turrets of granite. The moonlight began to brighten it; the night was very still, and where Bradridge stood, without the prison walls, there arose two different yet similar sounds. For from within the prisons came the murmur of many thousand voices filtering out into the night; while from the valley below a river lifted its music through the silver silence.

Then, looking to the hill from which the moon was

just beginning to sail clear, the sergeant started to see, in inky silhouette against the light of the planet, three figures standing there. They were far off, but Bradridge had sharp eyes and could distinguish the motionless horsemen erect and clear cut against the radiant disk behind them.

The moon rose, and the horsemen, ignorant that chance had rendered them thus visible for a moment to human eyes, still held their ground, while Bradridge, with considerable wonder, returned to his men.

"My life in red!" he cried, "what will happen next? There 's three fellows perched a-top of that high ground to the east, like graven images, and I saw them, though little they guessed it. 'T is like enough they was these here highwaymen that be robbing every hen-roost in the Dartymoors. And for two pins I 'd call on a dozen of you chaps and we 'd march against 'em in the King's name and earn the reward."

But the guard laughed at their non-commissioned officer, and bade him go catch Blackadder and his friends single-handed.

"No doubt, when they see you coming along afoot, they 'll walk their horses, so as you shall overtake 'em," said a soldier. "And then you can break the fatal news to 'em that you 're Sergeant Bradridge, and that they must give up their pistols and horses and come along with you to be hanged."

Yet while a laugh went round at the sergeant's expense he had spoken truth, for it was actually Blackadder, Workman, and Godolphin who had stood aloft and gazed down into the circle of stone and fire that glimmered beneath them on the grey desert. So still was the night that they could hear the sentries challenge and their

muskets clatter as the guard was changed. Then there rang out bugle calls from prison after prison, and anon most of the lights ran this way and that and flickered out, like sparks on burned paper, till only a few scattered dots of flame remained.

Felix, at some cost of entreaty, had brought the highwaymen by night to view the War Prison and consider if his cherished scheme of opening it was possible. Now, therefore, while sleep and oblivion fell below upon the multitude, and the rats, their racing ended, crept forth to feed in peace, these human rats were abroad also. They spoke together with the confidence of free men, well armed and well horsed; but Godolphin found his comrades little inclined to consider the enterprise to which he felt committed.

His eyes were of course now opened, and the world, as seen from his new standpoint, had long disgusted him; but while it was one thing to join the comrades and take part in half a dozen crimes, to leave them again proved another and more difficult task. They liked him well, and they were fair and honest with their fellow-thief; but his aims and ideals had long since ceased even to be matter for laughter. The game was nearly up in Devonshire, and Blackadder intended soon to be off to an old haunt near Salisbury Plain; but certain projects yet remained.

"None has smoked us yet," said Workman, "and we've got a brace of precious, useful birds in Kek and his mother, so we can make shift to complete our toll before we gang."

Kek, however, had failed to get back to prison market, and Godolphin had yet to learn whether Burgoyne would take concerted action in the matter of an attack on the

prisons. Thus far Blackadder and Workman pretended to fall in with their recruit; but to-night Felix was to learn more concerning their real opinions. For some time they surveyed Prince Town in silence, then Shadrach spoke.

"'T would be a fine thing to thunder down upon 'em, like a legion of devils, no doubt. We 'd trust to the surprise and 'burke' a few of the red-coats and help the hordes hid there to break out of their mouse-trap."

"Well said!" cried Felix. "I knew you 'd feel it so when you came to see them. Surely it strangles one's trust in humanity to think of all those thousands of useful men cast there to rot. Victims of iniquity — pawns in a game played by the idle, vicious rich — the rich that are battening, while these poor wretches starve with cold and hunger. You are men — you think as I do?"

Workman spoke.

"I 'm all on the side of Ameriky in this pickle; and so 's Shad here, ain't you, Shad? And if they 'd licked us ——"

"They can't lick us now. 'T is all over bar shouting," said Blackadder.

"If they had done so, we was going to throw in our lot with the conquerors and go over to the United States. 'T is a fine free country — full of fine free fellows, and better suited to our way of life than England — or even Wales."

"Then help these sailors to be free — as a protest against their tyrants. Let them find that there are men in England still."

"I 'm with you, heart and soul," declared Blackadder. "A very thoughtful creature am I, with a high point of view, as becomes one who 's got the blood of kings in

his veins. I 'm an enemy to society, young Felix Godolphin, for the same reason that you are. Because 't is the only thing for a brave man to be."

Workman laughed.

"Lord! to hear him. You might have been a hedge preacher, Shad. Then you 'd have rose to be a bishop yourself, instead of a highwayman, who will be stopping a bishop's coach on Bush Down next week."

"You turn everything into folly, William," answered the other. "What I say is sober truth: that I never turned my back on society till it got too bad for my high stomach."

"Stuff and nonsense! You turned your back on it because you was a born sportsman and could n't live a tame life. 'T is the blood in you that made you what you are. Kings or no kings, your own father was hanged at Tyburn, and you can't deny it."

"He was — and he died as he lived — like a gentleman. And I shall do the same. I shall offer a pinch of snuff to Jack Ketch and bow to the people afore they turn me off, and then take my place along with King and Turpin, and the other swell mobsmen. But you — Lord knows where I picked you up — or why. You 're a low blackguard, William, you don't understand my fine instincts, nor yet Master Godolphin's."

Workman made a sharp answer, and then Felix spoke.

"To the matter in hand," he said. "You, at least, are on my side, and Workman won't desert us."

"I 'd dearly like to get in touch with those brave boys," declared Blackadder, "but, though full of such poetry, the times are up against us doing good in this wholesale sort of way. 'T is every man for himself in this blasted England nowadays, and we brainy chaps must look

forward. For consider. Suppose we take our lives in our hands and try to rush it. Suppose all goes well, and two out of three of us are n't riddled with government bullets — even then — what happens?"

"We head an army."

"Well, even grant we find a ready and obedient army at our command."

"Good powers, you 're mad!" cried Workman; "I always thought you was touched, Shad, and this proves it."

"No, Godolphin," continued Blackadder, "we don't head an army; and even if we did, an army of half-naked, half-starving Yankees, without a weapon among 'em, ain't the sort of army I care to march in front. 'T is quite out of the question, and you must see it is. What do we do, in a word? Why, queer our own pitch — loose five thousand highwaymen in Dartymoor! Then where do we come in? They must have it out with Fate on their own, and good luck to 'em. For us there 's a humbler task or two — namely, the bishop's coach, and a farm here and there, where Kek knows there are good pickings. Then back to Stonehenge I go. There 's a warm welcome waiting, from them we know about, and I 've got a friend in London that 's very anxious to see me again."

"So have I," said Workman. "I can't let my wife be a widow no longer. 'T is n't playing the game. In fact, I 've done here and want to start my pub before 't is too late."

The dreamer was bitterly disappointed.

"I have pinned my hopes on this! You have thrown dust in my eyes — fooled me — uttered false promises!" he cried.

Workman laughed and Blackadder growled. The contention was sharp between them.

"No more of this!" said the leader at last. "Let us away. If poetry you want, Master Godolphin, poetry you shall have, for you know our purpose to-night. Away to Cocks Tor and the ugly fruit we 've got to pluck on the side of it! As for the War Prison, 't is madness to meddle there. Success would mean failure, and a man must put his own good first, since no other man will do so for him. Let 'em wait for the peace. I wager you 'll not hear that Yankee gentlemen of the road are freeing British prisoners over the water!"

"You 're a brace of cowards, and I have striven in vain to lift your spirits above your own sordid needs and rascalities," answered Godolphin. "We must part; I 'll no more of this."

"Not so fast, friend. An oath is an oath, and remember that there is no such honour as that held among our kind. We trust you and you trust us. 'T is two to one in this matter, and two to one ever carries it. Belike we 'll please you mightily yet, and draw the eyes of the nation on us. We may go higher than the gallows — as high even as our hearts. Come! the moon 's up and it gets something too bright for modest men in this open place."

It was Blackadder who spoke, and Felix who answered.

"I 'll not join you. I 'm out of tune for sport to-night. You 've hit me hard, for I 'd built on this piece of work, and thought to draw England's eyes upon us. I remember my oath. 'T was but in heat that I spoke of breaking that. We 'll sink or swim together. But I 'm more like to sink than swim, for my soul is very heavy and life is dark for me. I 'll get me back to Metherill. Have

no fear that I 'll play you false. Am I not gallows bird as well as ye?"

"So be it," answered Workman. "We 'll go alone, for our game wants a stout heart and a nose none too tender, I 'm thinking. High game 't will prove by now. Ha — ha!"

Felix did not answer or laugh at the jest. He knew their purpose, but was in no mood to take a hand in it. Their refusal to help his mad project had cast him down mightily, for he had built upon it and suffered himself to suppose that such a deed would be to strike a blow at the evil in the world. He had worked with the highwaymen, taken like risks, committed like rough and ready wrongs. But he had always regarded these sordid and obvious sins as necessary steps to deeds of bravery and altruism. His muddled brain had confused issues and blinded him in a dozen directions. He was a youthful Quixote, who saw life neither singly nor whole, but had built up an imaginary world and believed that his right arm was destined to advance the welfare of suffering humanity; that his wild wits were consecrated to the mighty task of soothing earth's far-flung, sorrowful cry.

Godolphin galloped off without more words, while Blackadder and his companion, setting their horses' heads in a contrary direction, also disappeared from the tor.

They spoke of Felix, and the elder expressed a sentimental sorrow at his disappointment, but the more business-like and practical rascal only laughed.

"He 's got a bee in his bonnet and 't is time we drew it out. There 's the makings of a first-rate in him. But this woman's nonsense — about right and law and liberty and the people — 't will end by getting us all in a mess."

"His heart will soon grow hard," answered the other. "The boy's barely turned of twenty. I felt like that. 'T was all boiling and seething in me, and I 'd have cut the throat of King George, if I could have got to him, the day they hanged my father. I was going to set the world right, I promise you, then. But somehow, like most other fine fellows, I found the task a bit beyond me when I came to man's estate. And so, after a very valiant effort to live up to the blood in my veins, I gave up the enterprise as hopeless, and turned my attention to easier things."

"There they stand!" cried Workman, interrupting his chief, and pointing ahead.

They had ridden through a river valley, and were now upon the side of a high hill on the western brow of the Moor. Grey light from the moon soaked all things and gleamed here upon the scattered granite, here in pool and fen. It also illuminated two tall, black objects that stood on a little knoll some fifty yards from the highway.

CHAPTER XIV

IN WHICH GENERAL SIR ARCHER GODOLPHIN COMES BY A SHORT CUT TO THE GALLOWS

ON the morning of this winter day Sir Archer and his man, Silas Squibbs, had started early on horseback for Tavistock, to attend a political meeting. The gallant knight lost no opportunity to publish his principles, and had set forth well primed to address the parliamentary forces of the ancient borough. He sought distraction in this manner from his own sad heart. Men were rough and manners were rougher in the country districts a hundred years ago, but as Sir Archer truly said, "he who has seen his leg removed by a cannon-ball has little fear of dead cats and cabbage stumps."

He enjoyed the din of conflict, and, at present, ran after it eagerly that, for a time at least, he might banish the personal sorrow that overwhelmed his life. His headstrong son, he doubted not, was employing youth and energy against the causes of justice and of right; but the truth concerning Felix he little guessed; indeed, none as yet had gleaned any suspicion of it.

Beyond the shining waters of Walla, where the little river glittered on her way to Tavy under a low winter sun, went Sir Archer and Mr. Squibbs. There spread upon their right the Staple Tors, and next came a hill of jade green spattered with granite and the fading auburn of the fern. Like a curtain the cloud shadows rolled off

this elevation and revealed detail in the wintry Moor. The great boulders shone with lustrous lichens and moss, while between them spread the faded herbage, or rolled the darkness of the winter heather and autumnal furze. Here and there a bog gleamed green and gold under the sunlight, and about the marshes twinkled pools of water and shone dead clumps of rush and sedge. Upon this wilderness, above a little knoll, stood two sinister objects — the same that Blackadder and Workman were destined to visit on the midnight which would succeed this morn.

Sir Archer pointed to them, and improved the occasion.

"So perish two forces of evil. There hang John Mattock and Arthur Mattock — children of a bad man and woman, whose hairs will now go down with sorrow to the grave. A hideous example of how the devil, once allowed to whisper at a man's ear, never ceases from his infernal purpose until it is accomplished."

"They sheep-stealers you be telling about," said Silas, regarding the objects with indifference.

For close at hand, tainting the air and tempting a croaking company of carrion crows, hung two dead men.

Sheep-stealing was a capital crime a hundred years ago, and these unhappy brethren had not only suffered death, but had been employed afterwards as a public warning to strike fear into those who might follow their evil courses. They hung now a second time, for after execution at Exeter their corpses were conveyed to the place of their theft and set up here on twin gallows to be a terror to the country-side. They 'hung in chains,' as it was technically called. Iron cages, of a size to receive a man, were suspended from the tree, and into these receptacles the dead had been thrust, there to remain until forces of nature dismembered them and

suffered their disunited limbs to drop through the iron lattice upon the earth below. A hideous spectacle they presented in the morning sunshine, nor could the fascinated eye easily ignore them, for the pair of gallows dominated the scene, and a cloud of sooty birds that hovered and cried above them also arrested attention. The cages were drawn aloft through a bolt in the beam by chains; and the corpses, in hideous semblance of life, appeared to sit within, their arms and legs thrust through. Already decay had overtaken the poor dead men, for one was headless and another had lost an arm. Squibbs, whose secret spirit was humanitarian, cried out against this dismal horror.

"'T is a damned shame, and the men's mother living in sight of it! Where 's Christian charity and human decency? They be lost out of the world, seemingly!"

But his master was harder than the iron of the gallows.

"Keep your pity for those who deserve it. The woman that bred yonder men needs none. Let the spectacle enter into her soul — 't is no more than justice, for doubtless their crime had never been committed had she brought them up in the narrow way. A notorious evil liver was she, and her husband also. It may be the will of the Almighty that the parents shall be saved alive. He knoweth the medicine for every disease."

Mr. Squibbs did not dare to argue, but his bosom grew hot.

"Women," continued Sir Archer, "are cast in a different mould from men and, albeit the eternal instinct of maternity is a fierce and feverish thing, they share that with the inferior creation. It is a blind impulse and no more. They do not suffer as we do; they do not feel

as we do; they have not our powers of imagination; they are not so brave, so honest, or so elevated in their outlook upon eternity. They have souls, even as we have; but their nervous organization is less subtle and swift; they are not so highly endowed — an inferior creation, in fact. Therefore you must not suppose the mother of yonder carrion will endure as much as you fancy. No woman's heart was ever broken yet."

"Don't you tell the people nothing of that at Tavistock, your honour," urged Silas, "because the town be still in a proper upstore over this job, and they 're shouting against the judge and crying out that the dead men did ought to be buried decently. In fact, they 're making a great to do about it."

"So much the better. We 're growing too soft — too soft and flabby. They 'll hear truth from me — and only the truth, so long as the Almighty permits my tongue to wag in my mouth. Well may He be a terrible God; well may He wield the lightning and speak with the voice of earthquake and thunder! Mankind will listen to no other voice. These are no days for the dove and the olive branch, and God knows it. We are a rebellious people — over-fed, spoiled, pampered — and while the food is yet in our mouths the Lord will surely smite us."

"And the folk will smite you, if you tell 'em that ugly story," answered Squibbs. "I know the Tavistock men — ban't I one of 'em? And I know they 're smarting under many wrongs — real or fancied — just now. So I hope your honour will treat 'em gentle — else, like enough, I 'll bring you home along to-night wi' a broken crown."

"You are a caitiff, Squibbs," answered Sir Archer.

"That you are a physical coward is common knowledge, for have I not known you to fly before a turkey-cock? But for that I forgive you, since such bravery cannot come by taking thought. Moral cowardice, however, is a different thing, and for that no reasonable being gifted with ordinary mental endowments can offer any excuse. The mind conscious of right should fear neither man nor devil. But your faith is weak — I detect a dangerous tendency to compromise, an inclination to let well alone. The truly brave man lets nothing alone, for he knows that in this slovenly and cowardly world good and bad alike can be made better."

Mr. Squibbs sniffed under this sermon, but made no effort to excuse himself. The horsemen passed away together and proceeded about their business.

Anon Sir Archer, true to his traditions, spoke fearlessly before a crowd. He was under fire once or twice, and if the animal an . vegetable refuse hurled at him missed their mark, his ears were hit hard enough by hustling and bitter words. Ferocity, the weapon of the poor and ignorant, stalked the land all claws and teeth at that time, and it was Sir Archer and his kind who from their citadels of birth, wealth, and education poured poisons into the wounds of the poor, and bred class hatred — still keen enough beneath the veneer that a century of education has spread upon it.

There was an outcry against man-traps and spring-guns at Tavistock, and the knight, taking the side of his caste, openly advocated any measure that would drive the people off the land of their masters. He was hooted and assailed; but his friends came between him and the angry folk, and a magistrate conveyed Sir Archer presently to the safety of his own dwelling.

There existed, however, a very real danger that the old man might meet with rough usage on his homeward way, if spied setting out upon it. Against his will, therefore, he was detained until a late hour, by which time Tavistock had gone to rest and the coast was clear. Thus it happened that not until near midnight did Sir Archer start to ride home with Silas Squibbs beside him. The old soldier carried a brace of pistols, lent to him by his friend, and since the events of the day had been stormy and the sense of the meeting gone very forcibly against him, he found himself in no amiable mood, and, indeed, ready to offer fight at the shortest invitation to any who might court it.

Chance now set four horsemen upon the moonlit confines of the Moor, and while Silas and his master climbed up from the crossways known as Moor Shop and approached the foot-hills of Cocks Tor from that direction, there came in the other Will Workman and Shadrach Blackadder. These gentlemen had just sighted the pair of gallows, grey and silvery under the moon, and were about to leave the high-road and approach them, when Workman's ears marked the regular beat of hoofs. He looked ahead and, with eyes trained cat-fashion to see in the dark, noted that two riders were approaching.

"So be it," said Blackadder. "Business before pleasure 's my motto and always was. We 'll look to our bit of fun later and stop these night-birds first. God send it 's somebody worth stopping, but I 'm feared we can hardly hope it. The prosperous people won't journey after night-fall now."

They retreated off the road, where a dozen boulders were piled higher than their horses' backs beside the way, and waited for the night-farers to approach.

"I 'll stop 'em," said Workman, drawing a pistol. "And if you find I want you, you can come after."

He slipped on his mask, trotted out, and stood before the master of Prince Hall.

"Stand and deliver!" he shouted, "and quick about it — else 't will be Kingdom Come for ——"

More he did not say, because Sir Archer cut him short. The barrel of a pistol flashed, and a ball cut the corner of Will's three-cornered hat.

"I 'll stand and deliver, you damned scoundrel!" roared the knight, and he lifted his other pistol. But he would not have lived to fire it save for the good offices of the second highwayman.

Louder than the old soldier's voice roared Blackadder's

"Don't fire, Will!" he bawled, and, as he did so, thundered past him. He was on Sir Archer before he could discharge his second pistol, and struck it from his hand. Then he turned to Workman and spoke in his ear.

"All right, my lad. I saw what you did n't see. This old blade has got a timber toe. He 's our boy's father!"

The other was no stranger to the hiss of a bullet, and his nerve had not failed him.

"Lucky you saw it, Shad, for half a second more and he 'd have been out of his saddle."

Now Sir Archer struck with his empty pistol at Blackadder, and called to Squibbs to help him. He raved and struggled, and declined to surrender; whereupon Blackadder used his strength and lifted the furious old man bodily from his horse.

"'T is to no purpose you make such a splutter," said the big highwayman. "We know all about you — a

very gallant, narrow-minded, old fool that can't see further than the point of his weather-beaten beak and lacks for wit and sense, and understanding, and Christian charity. If I could give you a little more sight to cure your blindness, in exchange for your watch and seals and that fine gold ring on your finger, I would gladly do it; but as soon throw cheesecakes to a pig as think to make your sort see truth. You belong to the mouldy past. You and your kind want knocking on the head, and 't is a thousand pities when you lost your prop that you did n't get the cannon-ball in your guts, for you 'd have been no loss."

Sir Archer regarded him fiercely, and the old warrior's moustache bristled, while his breath spurted in jets of steam from his mouth.

"This passes belief! What purse-cutting wretch are you to beard me thus?" he cried.

"Shadrach Blackadder is my name. I 'm as good as you, and better every way. The blood of Irish kings — "

"Merciful powers! the vagabond that robbed my brother and daughter — the scum that can only prey on old men and maidens, women and children. You trash, you cowardly dogs — begone, I say! Cannot an honest man's eyes quell ye?"

He glared unavailingly, and Workman laughed.

"What a pompous, ancient ass it is! Now, old half-pay — quick! All that you have about you save your wooden leg. You owe us that much."

"Your bullet has spoiled Will's hat ——" struck in Blackadder. "A good snap shot, General, yet lucky 't was you did not shoot straighter, for then I had been called to revenge him."

"I can revenge myself," answered Workman, "and I

mean to. The peppery old gorilla may thank his God and you for his life; but I don't get pistol bullets humming at my ear holes and only say 'thank you.' Here 's this chap's little store. We 'll hope the master is better provided than the man. He keeps you pretty short, John Footman, don't he?"

Will had robbed Mr. Squibbs, who made no demur, but yielded the little that he had upon him without words.

"Empty the lunatic," continued Workman, "and then I 'll talk to him. I 'd have spared his old bones, save for his evil tongue; but we 've heard too much. 'T is a pretty shameful thing when two honest gentlemen can't follow their business in peace and quiet without being insulted and called to listen to crooked words from a rash old party that ought to be spending the fag end of his life in Bedlam!"

"May I live to see you scoundrels in yonder gallows," said Sir Archer. "May the day come when your devil's dance is ended, and outraged man has sent you before your outraged Maker! Then, had I my way, you should hang yonder — a hideous lesson before men and angels. And be sure of this, that the time is not far distant. The mills of God ——"

A loud roar of laughter cut him short, for while the General called Heaven's vengeance upon his persecutors, Blackadder had whispered to Workman and wakened this burst of merriment.

"God 's light!" shouted the younger highwayman, "there 's none like you, Shad! 'T is a brave thought, and a rare revenge on him. I 'll say no more — I can't better it. And t' other shall hang for company."

Blackadder turned to Sir Archer.

"Peace to your good wishes," he said; "we 'll take

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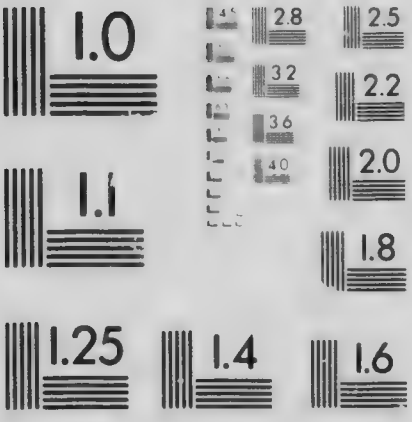

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'em for granted, my old Hotspur. No doubt some day you 'll have the pleasure of peeping down from your fine place in heaven, and seeing me and Will toasting on a red-hot grid, with devils to turn us now and then; but meantime the laugh 's here. Every dog has his day and every cat has her night; and now 't is night, and the powers of darkness be on our side. Hand over first, and quickly. Don't make me treat you like a schoolboy, turn you upside down and empty your pockets. Bear yourself like a man, General, and disburden!"

"Wretches!" answered the other, "an inscrutable Providence has seen fit to put me at your mercy; but I stand here unbowed. Outrage one old enough to be your father — 't is your work to make war on the defenceless — but think not that I help by any act of mine. I yield only to brute force." He crossed his arms and stood up square and defiant.

"'T is like Uncle Seppy, over again," said Workman. "D' you remember how he said the buckles on his shoes were of value, but left you to stoop and take 'em?"

"A silly pride, yet 't is my philosophy to let each man go his own way and do what seems best to him," answered Blackadder. Then, while his companion held the four horses Shadrach relieved Sir Archer of his purse, his watch and seals, his signet-ring, and his gold-rimmed glasses in a little silver case.

"Your wife's wedding-ring I leave with you," said Blackadder. "I am a delicate-minded man and have often surprised my clients by unexpected consideration. *Noblesse oblige*, General, and what is life without the spirit of give and take? No doubt your lady felt glad enough to leave you, for, by my faith, you must have been a troublesome spouse."

"Do not add insult to injury," answered the General. "If, as you brag, there is some drop of noble blood run into the kennel from which you spring, then pursue your coward's trade in silence."

"'T is done," answered the other, "save for the pistols. These will be more useful to us than to you, and I hope so amiable a gentleman may never again have occasion to open fire on a fellow-creature. Let us pray that you will not see another shot fired in anger, General."

"When you have had your way, we will depart," answered the old man; "and be sure of this: your thread is spun! Heaven has suffered you to put this infamous cap upon your crimes. The end is near; I shall live to see it."

"Like enough; but not yet. In truth 't is Shadrach here and I that now depart — not you. You have much to think on and much to regret. We will offer you a little leisure wherein to reflect on your ignorant errors," answered Workman. "Listen: when you blustered upon us and fired your pistol in my face so unmannerly, Mr. Blackadder and I were bound on a simple errand. 'T was to fling down yonder shameful things, fling 'em over and so utter our protest against the powers who can hang hungry men for eating a bit of mutton. 'T was our humane opinion, General, that the gallows is a thing grown out of date in a Christian land. Shad and I are reformers, and we 've wrote our new laws here and there. We think very heartily that capital punishment should cease. We are against it on principle. We like not the idea of it. 'T is a crude and barbarous expedient. But to meet such a rawhead and bloody bones as you, is to shake our opinion. While such fierce and hard-hearted war dogs are suffered to run free, the gallows must still

play its part. You have wished very earnestly to see us threaded up there — 't is an unchristian desire, General, and Blackadder takes it ill in you — so ill that he has decided an example must be made. Come, old Blunderbuss! the thing you wish for us, we will now mete to you! Age before honesty, General; and if, by some oversight of Providence, Shad and I indeed find ourselves hanging after you on yonder chains, our ghosts will be able to take cheerful consolation in the thought that Sir Archer Godolphin and spindle-shanks here were first to taste."

"In a word," said Blackadder, "instead of throwing down yonder gallows we mean only to throw down those poor tatters of men hung upon 'em. Then into the empty cages shall you old boys ascend. And there you can bide and hoot, like a pair of brave owls, to fright the foxes from the bones below. 'T will be the experience of your life, General. You 'll remember nothing like it — not even when they shot your leg off in the wars."

"Had they not done so, I should be a match for two such infamous cowards," the victim answered. "But it is as it is. I endure."

"Wise old man! What can't be cured must be endured — eh? Forward, then, and Shad and I will play hangmen; but have no fear. Not a hair shall be injured. You will sit aloft till the red sun rises, and cool your hot head and timber toe awhile. Doubtless some honest soul will pass this way after dawn to hear you yelping — unless, indeed, the yokels think you be the dead brethren come to life again. You must tell us your adventures on a future occasion. You might bid us to dinner at Prince Hall. Shall we name a night?"

While Workman bantered and looked after the prisoners, Blackadder, who was the working spirit, and whose energy seemed never sated, had gone before to the gallows. Chains held up the cages, and where they swung the rusty links shrieked, as though the lumps of humanity within them still lived and cried.

Loosening both chains, Blackadder lowered the cages to earth, opened them, and cast out the remains of the dead. Then, while Squibbs, whose hair stood on end, and whose face poured sweat, fell upon his knees and called his Maker to rescue him, the highwaymen picked up Sir Archer between them, thrust him bodily into an empty cage, and made it fast upon him. A moment later Blackadder put his strength to the chain and drew the victim aloft. There he swung, twelve feet above the ground, with his face raised to the moon and his wooden leg thrust through the bars and pointing to earth. His hat had fallen off, and his white hair shone. Next, Silas Squibbs found himself treated in the same way, and the rusty links uttered agonized sounds as he was dragged aloft. There they hung together — master and man — and the highwaymen stood between the corpses below and took off their hats to them.

"Sing, sing, boys!" cried Workman, while his companion made the chains fast. "Dammy! Never such a chance for a merry catch will fall to your lot again. Sing a good tripping measure, Sir Archer; and Shad and I will dance to it. Or if your whistle is dry, then let longshanks see what he can do to add to the joy of the night."

He chaffed on, but Sir Archer answered never a word. His eyes were on the sky, while Squibbs chattered to himself like a cold monkey.

Blackadder examined the horses and found them of little worth.

"Your steeds," he said, "would find no ready market; therefore we make you a present of them. Hitch them to that thornbush, Will, so that they may be ready for our friends when morning comes and they are released. And now, farewell, gentlemen. You have to thank Blackadder and Workman for your nags and your lives; therefore be zealous to speak well of them when the opportunity offers."

The highwaymen rode away together. Their voices died upon the night, the stroke of their horses' hoofs sank and ceased. There was left only the two other horses fastened to the thorn tree and the two men lifted aloft on their evil perches, with cruel irons, not meant for the living, cutting into their flesh.

The white moon sailed at the zenith overhead and the smell of death hung heavy in the air beneath. Squibbs gazed fearfully from his place and waited for his master to speak. But Sir Archer was silent. So near were they that Silas could see the other's expression, and watch the light shine in his eyes when he opened them; but the old man was speechless, and at length his servant spoke.

"How is it with your honour?" he asked feebly.

For a moment Sir Archer did not reply. Then he answered.

"It is with me at the lowest ebb of life and hope and faith. Though my body is lifted high, as was my Master's, yet my heart is low as His, when called to drink the cup. All — all is gone from me — all but my unconquerable trust in God. Spare me speech. I have no desire to be angered again. Let my humiliation and shame eat deep, deep into my soul, as this iron is eating into

my body. Be silent, for I would fain hear the voice of my Maker explaining this thing to me."

The other groaned, but spoke no more. A night-bird, on wings that made no sound, settled above the head of Sir Archer Godolphin. It uttered a long cry; then he moved, and the bird spread its wings and slid away into the darkness.

An hour later, being by then in great physical suffering, the old soldier felt for his watch that he might read the time before the moon sank; but his fob was empty, and he remembered.

Ten miles away that same timepiece formed matter for speech.

"It will be well that we keep this jest from our young game-cock," said Blackadder, referring to Felix Godolphin. "My faith! but he would little like the tale, even though he hates his father's name."

"We need say nothing at present," answered the other. "His sense of fun lacks ripeness to approve this little game with the gallows. A time will come when such things may appeal to him. As yet, his noble sentiments spoil his sense of humour and make him a dullard."

CHAPTER XV

TRUEMAN TRINNY SPORTS 'PINK' AND HUNTS A DOCTOR

TO see Mr. Trueman Trinny on a hunting morning was worth some trouble. In his big velvet jockey cap, white cords, top boots and red coat, astride his aged but clever hunter, he presented a pleasing spectacle; and in the field no man was more popular or enjoyed a greater reputation for straight riding and fearless horsemanship. In truth, he took no risks, but he and his steed were skilled and experienced: they knew the Moor as few men or beasts knew it.

Before dawn, on the day following General Sir Archer Godolphin's exaltation, Trinny arose and made his toilet by candle-light. Then, with clinking spurs, he descended, saddled his horse, and set forth to a distant meet. He proceeded toward Tavistock and, to his surprise, found that the journey would not be made alone, for from Bair Down appeared another horseman, and Jacko Caunter appeared on a steed as lean and hungry looking as himself.

The farmer greeted the publican, and together they jogged forward.

Dawn showed in a low red gash along the south-eastern hills, but the setting moon still shone, and threw light enough to cast a shadow behind the horsemen.

"How you find time and money to go fox-hunting do

puzzle me," grumbled Jacko. "I can't spend money on no such luxuries."

"No," answered the other, "and I'll tell you why, my boy. 'T is the point of view. You'd rather keep ten shillings in your pocket than rise with the cocks, like me, and have a run with hounds and maybe bring home a brave brush to hang along with t'others in my bar parlour. I say nothing to that, only don't gull yourself. I get my pleasure out of my cash one way; you get it another. I get money's worth; you keep the money. You could hunt foxes so well as me if you had a mind to, but you have not, so you pretend 't is beyond your purse. You can count more guineas than me, Jacko; but I have more sense, so I can count more pleasures than you."

"What 's left after a fox-hunt but tired thighs and a weary hoss?" asked Mr. Caunter scornfully.

"You 've got to be a fox-hunter to know," answered Trueman. "I could n't explain it to you and I 'm not going to try. If you can tell me what 's the use of piling up gold pieces for other people to spend when you are dead, and what pleasure lies in having a hat full of metal counters hid up your chimney, or behind your skirting-boards, then I 'll try and tell you what I get out of killing a fox; but neither of us can explain to t'other, so we won't waste time trying. All the same you might win more fun out of money, simply as money, than you do. Money breeds, but you don't put yours to use. 'T is barren money, and you can't even say 't is goodying in the bank. So you are a very uncommon sort of fool, Jacko."

"I 'd be an uncommon sort of fool if I trusted other people with my cash," answered the farmer. "These

ban't days to let any sort of men claw gold. There 's too great temptations about, and I 'd sooner face Blackadder and Workman than the sort of highwaymen as sit behind office windows. What with bubble companies and breaking banks and credit gone all through the county, a wise man keeps his money in his pocket and trusts none."

"My dear soul, you must trust, else you can't live. Life 's built on trust for all, though you think it is n't. You go about and say you trust nothing on God's earth but your dog. But what silly nonsense! You trust to right and left, because you 've got to trust. You trust your customers and you trust your wife and your daughter and your hinds. You trust Dick Bolt, and you trust me to sell you good liquor; you trust the spring to set your garden growing, and you trust your horse to carry you to Tavistock; you trust the Bailiff of the Duchy to treat you fair and square; you trust the sun to rise presently, and you trust Peter to let you into heaven when your work 's done, and you come afore the gate."

"I trust because I must. I know what men are — all liars, like the Psalmist said."

"In his haste — remember that. No, no — 't won't do, Jacko. You 've got to run your life largely upon trust, like every other man. If you trusted none, none would trust you; and how would you fare then?"

"I don't trust half them you say I do," answered Mr. Caunter. "I don't trust my daughter out of my sight, and I don't trust my wife too far neither, and as for Bailiff, I don't trust him a yard, because I know he 's all for Duchy and all against the tenants."

"You must n't say that. Bailiff 's a very cautious man, that 's all, and these be times for caution. Who

shall blame him there? That chap will never commit himself and, again, who shall blame him? 'T is like this with Bailiff, he calls at the *King o' Bells,* we 'll say — and I bid him 'Cheero!' and give the man a drop of the pale sherry he delights to feel on his tongue. 'Well, Trinny,' says he, 'and how is it with you?' 'Nothing to grumble about,' I answer; 'but you 're well met, for I wanted to speak to you.' 'And welcome,' replies Bailiff. 'I 'm always only too glad to serve the Forest tenants, Trinny.' 'T is like this, Bailiff,' I say; 'I want to take out a couple of stones at the bottom of yonder wall, so that my ducks can get down to the river.' With that he frowns and strokes his chin. 'Ah! building alterations!' he says very thoughtfuly. 'Of course I shan't do nothing about it till you 've considered it in all its bearings, Bailiff,' I answer the man. 'I know these big things can't be done in a minute.' 'Quite right, quite right, Mr. Trinny,' he answers; and then he gets confidential like. 'I ought to tell you that the Duchy has been put to a great deal of expense lately — collecting its rents,' he says, 'and I warn you that 't is very unlikely, even if permission can be got, that we shall be able to make any contributions to the cost of these changes.' 'I quite understand that, Bailiff,' I say. 'We tenants must n't ask the Duchy for luxuries, because well I know the unheard of expenses the poor Duchy be put to, to make both ends meet. The wonder is Duchy have n't starved to death long ago. But I 'm wishful to say that if the Prince of Wales sees his way to letting me take a couple of stones out of the bottom of that wall, I 'm prepared, on my oath, to do it entirely at my own expense, and it shall cost the Duchy nothing.' Then Bailiff nods and strokes his chin again and asks if I have any

objection to say that afore witnesses. So I shout up Jan French and say it all over again, and Bailiff calls Jan to bear witness and makes a note in his book of the day and the hour when I gave that solemn promise. 'I 'll see what can be done, Mr. Trinny, I 'll see what can be done,' he says. 'Of course, you know these things are in higher hands' (meaning the Duchy Office and not God A'mighty). 'But I shan't forget it. And I 'll represent it in a favourable light, I promise you, though you must n't think that I carry any weight with the Duchy — far from it — far from it, Mr. Trinny.' So I listen, sober as a bench of bishops, and thank him ten times over. And then he looks at it from a different point of view and grows doubtful again. 'T is only fair to warn you of one thing,' he says. 'If you are to have a right of way through that wall for your ducks, 't is a great addition and advantage and convenience to the ducks and to you. It improves the value of the ducks, and it improves the value of the property.' 'Of course, of course!' I say, well knowing what he 's coming to. 'Then,' he says, triumphant like, 'you must n't be surprised if Duchy takes account of that and puts on a bit to the rent. That 's only fair and right and justice — eh, Mr. Trinny?' 'Ab-so-lutely, Bailiff!' I answer the man. 'In fact, I should be very troubled about it and think you was n't doing your duty by Duchy, if it was otherwise.' 'Ah!' he says, 'I wish the rest of the tenants had your sense!' And then off he rides with the weight of the world on his back. A good soldier and servant of Duchy, that man. It don't know its luck."

"I call him a fool."

"You 're a fool to say so, Jacko. He 's a rare chap, and worth his weight in gold to any master, though he

do ride sixteen stone I believe. No fool him! Behind that bush of a beard of his he 's a very clever chap. We understand each other. After he 'd gone I made the hole in my wall in half a minute, and a month later he came along and said he was terrible pleased to let me know from headquarters that the Council had sat on the improvements and passed 'em, and were n't going to put up the rent a penny!"

"All goes well with you — I wish 't was the same with me. But things run crooked, try as I will. I hoodwinked Bailiff a bit ago, and that was the only good day's work I 've done for a month o' Sundays. But of course he 'll get back on me. And my pig-headed darter won't wed Richard Bolt; and the war 's coming to an end, so there 'll be good-bye to prison market; and my brother — him that died to Totnes — did n't leave me nothing under his will, but a lot of insolent cheek. He told the lawyer to write that, owing to my great cleverness and skill in saving, I should need nothing from him; but he hoped that I 'd spend ten shillings of my own money on a mourning ring to keep his memory green. Kicked me from out of his grave like that! And the blasted lawyer read it after the funeral feast, and the relations all laughed. If his coffin had n't been buried by then, I 'd have gone to the churchyard and spat on it! My daughter Charity was down for thirty pound, however. I got that."

"And have put it away in a hole, I suppose. She 'll thank you for nothing some day. I heard the maid was sick, but hope it is n't so."

"Sulky, that 's all — vexed and got her conscience pricking her, no doubt, because she knows she ought to take the chap from Dart Hollow and she won't. What the mischief more should any girl want? He 's a fine,

tall, upstanding man, and well to do, and owns his farm and all. And he would lay down his life for her."

"Perhaps she 's loving somebody else?"

"Not her! I 'd soon have spied out that and shamed her from it. No, she 's heart-whole and there 's no excuse at all. If I knowed a way to make her take him, I 'd set about it. Some say that old Mother Brimblecombe, over Chagford way, can give a maid a drink to make her fall in love with a man; and when I was out there I went to the old witch on the subject. She swore she could do it as easy as need be. But she axed five bob — to be paid in advance — and I laughed in her face, and told her she was a damned, old, fat witch and should n't have a penny till after the charm had worked. Of course she 's a rogue, and ought to be ducked in the hoss-pond."

Trinny smiled to himself.

"Perhaps she 's over-looked you and put the evil eye on you, Jacko. You say everything goes wrong, so maybe Mother Brimblecombe, of Metherill, is at the bottom of it."

"If I thought that," said the farmer, "I 'd ride across and have her dragged out of her hole and took afore the Justices."

"Don't you fear — 't is n't her — 't is your own cranky, suspicious, grasping spirit," said the innkeeper bluntly. "You 're a silly man — a terrible silly man, for all you think yourself so clever. You defeat your own object and queer your own pitch and foul your own nest every day of your life. You go on trampling roughshod on people's feelings and fighting for your own hand and taking everything and giving nothing; and then you whine to me and tell me life's awry and you don't know

what the world 's coming to. You want everything for nothing — that 's what 's the matter with you; and for a man of your age not to know you can't get anything for nothing, let alone everything — why, 't is a poor look-out and a shocking bad advertisement for your wits. You try to see how you look to other people, and if you can only get a glimpse of that sight, you 'll like it so little, Jacko, that I lay my life you 'll seek to alter it for the better."

What Mr. Caunter might have answered to this drastic reproof will for ever remain in doubt. He prepared, indeed, to reply with some heat and had even opened his mouth for the purpose; but then came an interruption, for two dismal sounds crept over the Moor — each mournful enough, each eerie and creepy in the dim dawn hour, but each very different from the other. One came thin and sharp as a plover's mew; the other was gruffer and deeper, like the barking of a hound. The west was still purple with departing night, but upon the east, red morning had broken, and the winter waste stretched before the travellers, its dead sere grasses flaming ruddy in the low light.

They passed beneath Cocks Tor, and from the pair of gallows ahead of them came the doleful sounds. Blood-red the grim trees towered, and it seemed that the corpses hanging upon them were possessed of wandering spirits, that now moaned and shouted at the approach of living men.

Both riders reined in their horses, but while one suffered no emotion save that of profound surprise, the other was so terrified that he nearly fell to the ground. Farmer Caunter exhibited all the phenomena of funk. Sweat poured down his lantern jaws; his mouth fell open;

his hair felt alive; his limbs twitched. He tried to speak, but only uttered incoherent sounds. Then he found his voice.

"Gallop! Gallop! For God's sake!" he cried. "'T is the Power of Evil got in 'em! Gallop, Trinny, or we be dead men!"

But the other was staring at the gallows.

"Shut your mouth, you knock-kneed know-naught!" he said. "'T is no powers of evil, or if it is, we can stand up to 'em, I suppose, if we be Christians. There 's living men strung up there! See for yourself."

"It can't be, it can't be," moaned the other. "'T is the rotting carcases of they sheep-stealing Mattock brothers, and the Dowl and all his angels be there."

"Come and have a look at 'em then, so you 'll know 'em again," answered the intrepid Trinny. "There 's something a bit out of the common afoot, and if I 've got to hunt the Dowl, instead of a fox, I only hope I 'll get his brush at the finish. 'T would be a great addition to my collection, for sartain!"

He rode forward, but Caunter would not budge, and called him back.

"You 're playing with death!" he screamed; then he turned tail and galloped fifty yards along the way he had come. From here he stopped to mark what fate overtook the publican.

Trueman Trinny, meanwhile, rode gallantly forward and found the unhappy victims of the highwaymen swinging helplessly above him. Both were suffering great agony, and when their rescuer lowered them to earth poor Squibbs fainted, and remained unconscious for a considerable time. The General was also in a condition of extreme exhaustion, and very thankful for Trinny's

pocket-flask. But he drank only a few drops and then pointed to the unconscious servant.

"Give it to that poor fool," he said. "He needs it more than I. Rub my leg, Trueman, rub my leg; 't is knotted with cramp."

Trinny shouted to Caunter, who, seeing men and not fiends, approached as swiftly as possible. He made up for his cowardice by loud explosions of fury at the story Sir Archer now related.

"The anointed rogues! The anointed rogues!" he shouted. "Please God I get 'em in reach of a pistol some day! Like a brace of mad dogs I 'll shoot 'em! May they come to Bair Down — the sooner the better. I 'll tear their throats out; I 'll make mincemeat of 'em for the hounds!"

"Don't be wishing too much, Jacko," said Trinny, drily. "For you 're well known as the luckiest man round this part of the world, and what you wish always happens."

"I fired on one of the scoundrels, but missed his wicked brains by three inches," said Sir Archer, "and before I could level my other pistol 't was knocked out of my hand. The long rogue saved my life from his infuriated companion. Then they robbed me; heaped foul jests upon me and, helped by Satan, devised this crowning ignominy and scandal. I must sit here a little longer till the sun has warmed my frozen carcase. Then we will get down to the inn at the bottom of the hill and rest awhile. We must rouse the country-side and lay these rogues by the heels if it can be done."

Squibbs had recovered; but his mind wandered, and he knew not what he said.

"If the General had treated 'em civilly and yielded

to numbers, we should not have suffered," he said.

His eyes rolled; his head nodded; he apparently addressed his remarks to the corpses of the sheep-stealers huddled at hand.

"Peace, miserable shadow!" answered Sir Archer, who did not perceive that poor Silas had taken leave of his wits. "Yielded to numbers, say you? Were we not twain to twain? Had you acted as I acted, had you drawn your pistol as I drew mine, we should have had one on the ground at our first volley and swiftly dealt with the other. But you — a guinea-hen would have been as useful. Take notice, Silas Squibbs! You leave me — you quit Prince Hall — so soon as your tottering limbs can bear you away from it. No poltroon homes with me!"

"Quite right, your honour! Well spoke," cried Jacko. "These be no times for cowards."

But his dismissal was lost upon Silas. He sat on the ground and spoke again to the dead:

"Let it be a lesson to you, Arthur Mattock; let this be a lesson to you not to go stealing other men's sheep no more. Here you be — all scat abroad — for your pains; for they 've hanged you, and now you be quartered too, and all the king's horses and all the king's men won't stick you together again, Arthur Mattock; not till the Trump of Doom will your poor bones fit together in their proper places now; and what you 'll hear then, when the great Books be opened, will want to make you drop to pieces again, no doubt — you and your brother likewise."

He wagged his head and laughed.

The General rose with difficulty.

"Set me on my horse," he said. "You 'll have to lift me, for I 've no life in my body yet; and since that poor

ruin has lost his mind, one of you must needs turn back with us so far as the inn. No doubt succour will approach from Prince Hall ere long. My daughter and brother will be in the extremity of trouble that we do not return."

Indeed, as he spoke, other mounted figures appeared, and a man or two, with Miranda and the clergyman, were soon beside the sufferers.

They heard all, and expressed thanksgiving and indignation.

"There shall be no peace for Dartmoor until I have those men," declared Sir Archer. "'T is beyond bearing that such infamies should happen among us. Now, get you gone, Miranda, for this is no sight for you. Your uncle will bide with me and convey me home. Trueman, farewell; I thank you for your timely aid."

But Mr. Trinny, with his usual quick sense, had another purpose. He pointed to Squibbs.

"Thank God your honour's pluck has pulled you through this awful adventure," he said, "and I hope 't will soon be well with you; but this poor babbler needs a saw-bones, for if we don't clap a plaister on his head or cup him, belike his scanty wits will fly for good. I 'll ride to Prince Town and see if Dr. Magrath can leave the War Prison for a while. I warrant, if 't is in his power, that the good man will be at Prince Hall before you return, to see to you both."

"Well thought on," said the reverend Septimus. "And we will accompany my brother home so soon as he can travel."

Trinny galloped off; Jacko Caunter and the servants looked after Squibbs, who chattered and laughed, while Miranda and her uncle rode one on each side of Sir Archer.

"Strange — passing strange that you and I should both feel the lash of these bad men," said Septimus Godolphin.

"'T is passing strange that a civilized land suffers them another hour," answered the General. "Only wait until I am my own man once more and ——" He broke off and shouted an order to the men in front of him.

"Halt! Let Jacob Masters and Tom Price turn back, and put yonder dead men in the chains and sling them up again!"

The servants shivered, but Jacko, who could be brave as need be where dead bones were the matter, volunteered to assist them.

Then the clergyman attended to Mr. Squibbs, who was now singing hymns and talking of his dead mother; while Miranda rode close beside Sir Archer and put her arm round him. He looked very ill, and was evidently weak and in much pain; but his eyes blazed, and the long night had not softened the fierce set of his great moustache.

"Cover my head, Miranda," he bade her. "The lesser villain, Workman by name, took my hat, because my bullet bored a hole in his. Tie your kerchief round me — my ears are chill and my crown is like ice."

She took a piece of silk from her neck and quickly wrapped it round her father's head.

"You shall hear all in due time," he told her. "Your curiosity at such an astounding occurrence is natural. You and the rest of the world shall be denied no detail. I shall write a letter to *The Times* newspaper, while yet this outrage remains freshly in memory."

CHAPTER XVI

BENJAMIN GUN MAKES A SECOND BID FOR FREEDOM AND A RED-COAT SHOOTS STRAIGHT

FOR many days Charity refused to see Richard Bolt, but at length her mother, who was back at market again, fell ill, and could not go to Prince Town; whereupon Jacko decreed that his daughter must do so. He was never weary of crying out against America and the Americans, but, though he always declared the prisoners' money burned his fingers, he had no mind to forego a penny of it.

"The War Prison will soon be a thing of the past," he said, "and though the Lord knows that nobody will be better pleased than me when the dogs are back in their own kennel again, yet, since they 've got to be fed so long as they bide here, we may as well have a hand in the business while it lasts."

Therefore Charity started as usual, with a boy to carry one heavy basket, while she bore the other; and it happened that on the way she fell in with Richard.

Twice she had refused his earnest entreaty to see him; but now it seemed that there was no escape. He joined her resolutely and spoke before she had time to bid him leave her.

"You drop behind, Adam Newte," he said to the youngster. "I want to talk to Miss Caunter." When the boy had obeyed, he turned to her and spoke simply.

"I 've prayed for this," he said; "not for myself, but for another."

He told her to her amazement how the present meeting had been planned and how her own mother, alive to the fact that her daughter's return to health depended upon it, had pretended to be ill, and thus thrown the necessity of going afield upon her daughter's shoulders.

"Be sure, dear Charity, 't is the best medicine. And let me tell you this: Ben Gun has forgiven me; so why not you?"

Before this direct attack she had nothing to say. Her mind had suffered some aberration after the events of Gun's escape and capture; she had shrunk for a long while even from the sight of him, and to-day she had dreaded meeting him again for reasons she was powerless to define; but now the farmer spoke with her, pleaded with her, and helped her to gather up the threads of those vital things in her life which had been dropped at the rectory house.

He spoke quickly and clearly while she listened. He explained that he regretted the past with exceeding bitterness, and was on the way to a complete atonement.

"Ben and I are close friends now, and it may surprise you to know that I only await your friendship again, Charity, to let my own friendship to Ben bear fruit. Without you I am hampered; with you our purpose cannot fail. Ben will tell you about the details when he 's free, and free he soon shall be. It only remains for you to make the necessary preparations. He is ready and so am I."

She listened, and could not doubt that Richard was in earnest.

"Trust me — trust me: that 's all I ask. If he can

trust me, surely 't is within your power to do so? Charity, you 'll be plagued by me no more: be sure of that. I 've larned my lesson; I know love can't be led, or made to a madman's order. Yes, a madman was I; but now I 'm sane again and I can see clear. What said I to Benjamin Gun awhile ago? 'She shall love me yet,' I said; and now the time has come to make you. 'T is harder far to bring a man safely off than it was, because Captain Short is savage and has sworn all his greatest oaths that he 'll have the turnkeys, and soldiers too, disgraced and imprisoned if more men escape. But there 's a way I 've hit on, and with a man like Gun 't is more than likely to succeed. He thinks mighty well of it, and now that you know and can take your part for him, we shall delay no longer."

She listened, all ears, and heard how she must make ready a snug hiding-place for Ben at Bair Down — a place that should prove beyond reach of her father's eyes.

"'T will have to be a secret nest," he said, "for Jacko, whatever his faults, hath eyes like a jackdaw, and he 'll poke and pry if he suspects; and should he chance on Benjamin, he 'll get his three sovereigns — like I did Charity."

She took his hand at that, in token of forgiveness, and he held it a moment.

"Thank you," he said. "I understand. I 've deserved evil at your hands, Cherry, but I 'll deserve good before two suns have risen. Ben shall be free to-morrow night, and you must make ready, for he 'll come to Bair Down hungry and thirsty — be sure of that. Your plans I leave to you and your mother; for she knows Ben Gun pretty well by now, and she 's only less in love with the man than you are. But there 's one thing you

must do, and that is meet him after midnight, when Bair Down 's asleep, and take him up with you from the river. That 's the tryst I 've planned for you — by the old 'clapper' bridge under Bair Down, where the stream winds through the beech trees and the pack-horse track crosses it."

"How will Ben know?"

"I 've given him a map. He can't go wrong. If 't is foggy, I may have to come with him; if 't is clear, he 'll steer by the stars — an easy matter for a sailor-man. To the wood he 'll come as straight as he may; then he 'll strike the water and work up stream till he finds the clapper bridge — and you."

"What time, Richard?"

"Somewhere 'twixt one and two of the clock it should be — to-morrow night. That will give you time to plan a hiding-place."

She was alive and alert indeed. Her sickness was forgot, her weariness and fainting heart became things of the past. Light sparkled in her eyes and joy bubbled in her voice as she realized what the immediate future held.

"Thank God I have to play a part!" she said. "I 'd never have been happy no more, Dick, if he 'd gotten off without help from me. I wish I could face danger for him."

"There will be danger, and to spare, with your father. You 'll need to be ever so cunning and clever, for he 's a hard man to hoodwink."

They went their way, and after a long silence Charity poured out her gratitude.

"I will never, never forget you, Richard. Dear to me and Ben shall you be for evermore after this."

He sighed, and then he smiled at her.

"I could wish to hear nothing better than that," he said. "I 'll earn it if I may. Wait a while. Ben must hear these things."

He sat down on a stone, drew out a little pocket-book, and tore a leaf therefrom. Upon this he wrote certain words, doubled them up into a small compass, and thrust them into the mouth of a dead duck.

"There!" he said. "Now he 'll know when to start."

One little corner of prison market was much enlivened by Charity's return, and indeed the prisoners needed some brightness and hope during these dark days. The nights were long and cold, and the horror of another winter faced the suffering legions. Peace came swiftly nearer; but Burgoyne, Stark, and others of the leaders, who knew the difficulties of such a huge transshipment, looked on ahead and saw that, even after peace was declared, long months must elapse before efficient transport could be counted upon and made ready to restore these thousands to their distant homes in the New World.

Market, however, proceeded briskly, and the *Vermont* men greeted Charity with great friendship.

"Lordy! we thought you was dead, Miss Charity," said Andy Midge. "I swear we 'd all have put on our black, go-to-meeting clothes in another week. And poor Ben worn to a thread paper for you — just look at the shadow of him, for that 's all that 's left!"

Then Benjamin appeared, burly and hearty as ever, and it was all that Charity could do to help diving under her stall and rushing into his arms. But she knew that she must see him to-day, and had got a little letter written and packed inside one of the red apples that Benjamin loved.

"Thank God — thank God!" he said, feasting on her with his eyes. "And you know how 't is — you understand?"

She nodded. Then they heard Richard Bolt speaking.

"Nay, nay, Charley Miller. Put down that duck, I say; 't is not for you. I 've heard of certain clever chaps in No. 4 as have got the trick of turning out three-shilling pieces that look as though they were new come from the Mint. There 's far too many of those lying coins flying about, as no doubt you know, and 't is time we honest traders took our wares to No. 5."

"Don't you fear us *Vermont* boys," answered Miller. "We would n't do such things — not for freedom, let alone for an old duck, as you found dead in a gutter a week ago, I dare say."

"Lemme hev him," cried Seapach. "I ain't got a cent of money; but you shall hev that little model of the *Vermont* that I made out of old bones for him. Come now — there 's a brave offer! 'T is a wonderful contrapsion, is the model, and will be worth a pot of money to your children some day, when we 're all dead and gone."

"I 'll give you half a dollar for the bird," said Gun. "Come now, Master Bolt — that 's a fancy offer."

A wink had passed between them, and Ben knew that the duck contained a message for him.

But Richard pretended to haggle.

"Three shilling be cheap for thicky duck, and you know it, Ben. You 're awful robbers, you *Vermont* heroes — the whole lot of you."

"Not us — all honest men on the *Vermont*," vowed Miller. "Never did you hear or see such honesty!"

"Throw in five of them carrots then — for a drop of

broth. Our mess-mate Petersen, him called 'Placid' — he 's not placid for the minute — got something in his lungs, and he wants comforting."

"I 'd do anything for him," declared Bolt. "Here 's the carrots and I 've fetched up a cream cheese that I wanted for Mr. Burgoyne to have, but if Petersen 's ill, 't is better he should have it."

"God send naught happens to him," cried Charity, "for there never was a kinder or better man."

She added some eggs from her basket, and Gun, who desired to see the contents of Bolt's hidden letter before the farmer left the prison, departed with the provisions and disappeared within the granite portals of No. 4.

He returned, however, before market closed, and reported that Petersen, from the sick bay, sent grateful thanks for the gifts. Ben now knew that his sweetheart had heard particulars of the proposed escape, and that there need be no further delay.

"*To-morrow night*," wrote Bolt. "*You do your part and I 'll do mine*."

The American was in mighty spirits when he returned, and Fate smiled so that he had a moment with Charity behind the corner of the cachot when he helped her with the boards and trestles.

"To-morrow — to-morrow!" he whispered, and as she bent down a moment she held his hand and kissed it.

"You love me still, Ben?"

"Love you? Lordy me! I never do nothing else from morn till night. You 'll see soon! But you 'll have to hide me close, Cherry; and look to it 't is in a hole beyond the reach of bayonets. I want no more of them."

The great bell boomed; the people departed; and when

night came and Benjamin passed the last hours he was destined to spend with his companions, he explained to them the secret of the morrow. Among those who listened was Robert Burgoyne, and he could see no certainty for the scheme.

"'T is about evens that you get clear, Ben," he said. "But you run a fair chance of doing no such thing. As sure as death they 'll shoot if they get wind too soon; but on the other hand, if all goes right you 'll be free without turning a hair and none will know it till the morrow. There 's only one question. Is the risk worth while with the peace so near?"

"There 's no risk as I can see, Cap'n Burgoyne. I 've got the wire and nails, and with them I can nip up the first wall and down t' other side in five minutes between change of sentries. Often enough the wall goes empty for half an hour at night. Then, in the great trench between the outer and inner walls, Dick Bolt will be lying ready for me. There 's an iron wicket in the outer wall, and Dick has a master key. A sally port they call it. Through that we go together and away. If 't is foggy, so much the better, and if 't is moonlight, no great odds, for in my fine coat, that he gave me, I 'd not be seen amongst the stones outside. There never was such a clever plan. And if we 're separated outside it matters not, for I 've conned his map till I could feel my way blindfold."

"You trust him?"

"That do I. Away we go, and my girl's waiting — her as knows the Godolphin lady, your honour."

"Aye, aye, Ben. Well, good luck to you."

"'T would be a brave thing if you and me both took fine wives home to Vermont, your honour!"

"Faith! it would, my son," assented Robert Burgoyne. "Who knows but we may!"

"And yet, for my part," added Gun, "if I could but come it round her father and snook him into friendship, I 'd very likely set up my rest along with him and bide in this country."

"She 'll decide what you shall do, Benjamin."

"I warrant we think alike, your honour."

Then the hours fled, another night passed, and a day of chill grey fog dawned sulkily to rejoice Gun's spirit. For fog he had prayed and, given fog, the chances of his safe escape must be enormously increased. Under the raw and icy gloom he moved cheerful and hopeful; Fate smiled upon his chances, and it seemed was prepared to atone for her former harsh treatment. The forces responsible for the first disaster were now ranged with him. He was certain that he would succeed. But Nature laughed in his face at nightfall, for the mists thinned away into fierce flakes of red flame at sunset; a lurid light blazed like a bale fire and, dying, left a cloudless sky of stars. When the time for his venture came — nigh midnight — the moon sailed high, and Gun shook his fist at it. "'T was just such a night," he thought, "when I got left afore." But his heart failed not, and he girt himself for the effort.

Conduits of sweet water ran through the prison yards, and to these a gang from each of the great blocks repaired regularly at dusk of day with buckets, that they might draw for their needs. Sometimes the conduits were hard frozen, and then ice was brought in masses to the prison and swiftly melted within doors; but on the day when Benjamin made his second bid for liberty the water ran fast and free. He went forth therefore with the rest, a

bucket in each hand. Andy Midge accompanied him and, when the buckets were full, he took them back while Gun hid himself close in an open shed, where tools were kept. The gang returned without him and none knew or guessed that there lurked a prisoner in this deserted corner of the great yard. After dark Ben gained half the height of the inner wall by climbing to the roof of the toolshed. Here, unseen, he waited while a hundred slitted windows blazed above him and the prison passed through the business of supper. Then the evening crept to its close. At nine o'clock the bugles blew the prisoners to their hammock beds aloft. Still Ben waited, and was glad of his grey coat against the frost that fell sharply from the twinkling stars to earth. But now the time had come, and when the sentry, who paced a portion of the inner wall, departed, Gun knew well that ten minutes or perhaps twenty must elapse before his successor appeared. He rose to his feet therefore, and with the big nails that Bolt had given him soon scaled the inner wall. The descent into the trench between the outer and inner circumvallations was a greater matter; but the tools were ready, and Ben wasted not a moment. He made his wire fast, uncoiled it, and was just slipping down when the fresh sentry, who for once delayed not, ascended the ladder fifty yards distant and set out upon his slow beat. Ben did not guess that he was so near. He slipped safely to the ground, met Richard Bolt, who was waiting there, and prepared to follow him.

"I 've got the iron gate in the outer wall open," whispered the farmer; "but 't is nearly half a mile away and we must go slow. Come after me and— By God! they 've found us out!"

Bolt's cry was caused by a shrill whistle above them,

for the soldier aloft had now discovered the wire dangling into the trench beneath him and raised an instant alarm.

"There's a man just got down between walls!" he shouted, and in half a minute from that moment a dozen soldiers, led by an officer, had run from the guard-room. They hastened to a door in the inside wall, opened it, and poured into the trench. Then, guided by the sentry aloft, who had seen Gun and Richard start to run, the soldiers set off after them.

The chase led over rough ground, but where the sweep of the twin walls bent to the south the space between them lay under clear moonlight and the pursuers gained their first glimpse of pursued, speeding more than a hundred yards ahead. Then four of the soldiers and their officer, runners all, drew swiftly from the rest and gained on the fugitives, while Sergeant Bradridge and the remainder of the guard came on behind.

A young subaltern, full of the excitement of the chase, led his men, and presently he shouted.

"Now a spurt, lads! One of 'em's down!"

It was true. Gun had fallen. But though he was up as quickly as possible, the accident served the soldiers to gain nearly fifty yards.

"We're almost at the grating!" cried Bolt. "If we can but get out and lock it against 'em ——"

For this, however, there was not time. The soldiery had gained, for the big men were not swift runners. Only forty yards separated hunters and hunted when Bolt reached the grating, pulled it open, and let Gun pass through before him. The dazed sailor, shaken by his fall, rushed out, and Bolt followed more slowly. He fumbled for the key, but the soldiers were on him and

he had barely time to dart away, when they rushed through the grating, one after another. Then a surprise awaited them, for one fugitive had entirely vanished, while all the red-coats could see of the other was a tall grey figure running directly from them into the Moor at right angles to the prison wall. He bounded over the rough ground and swiftly increased his distance. The young officer in command roared a warning.

"Stop! Stop! or I fire on you!"

Then to his men he cried —

"Ready! Present!"

Clear and bright against the black earth the grey coat showed. Twenty yards ahead a water-course yawned before it. Other soldiers had come out through the walls and joined their comrades.

"Fire!" came the word, and eight muskets bellowed simultaneously. The crash and chaos of sound beat upon the high wall of the War Prison like a wave, then rolled, and reverberated to the distant hills and so, mellowed, after a moment's silence, echoed faintly back again. There was a glare of light and a stench of burning powder while the smoke rose upward like a cloud, and spread out heavy and flat, silvered by the moon. A bell clanged inside the prisons, and another from far off answered it. The officer, bending under the cloud of smoke, ran forward and his men followed. Clearing the vapour, they looked ahead — to see sprawled out in the darkness before them a grey and motionless spot. Their man was down.

Of the eight bullets that had sped to stop him, seven shrieked round his ears and only ploughed the peat; but the eighth was in his head.

Others had followed the firing party, and yet others

had come after them. Now twenty soldiers and a couple of turnkeys hastened to the fallen runaway, while it was told that Benjamin Gun, of the *Vermont* privateer, had made another effort to escape.

"'T is the man without a doubt," said a soldier. "His grey coat, that he was so proud of, has cost him his life, for it made him an easy mark. I doubt he 's riddled. For one, I swear I hit him."

"Bound to be slain," puffed Sergeant Bradridge. "I 've warned him a score of times never to expose his great body to English shotsmen!"

They hurried forward and found the fallen runaway face downward with his hands outspread.

"Poor fellow — poor fellow — turn him over," directed the young officer sadly; "and bear witness that I warned him before I gave word of command to fire. I little thought we should hit him at that range."

They lifted the fallen man and saw a dark, bloody face with open eyes that stared up into the moonlight. But it was not the countenance of Benjamin Gun.

"My life in red!" cried Sergeant Bradridge. "What have you fools done? This ban't a sailor-man! 'T is farmer Bolt, of the prison market — well known to my family and his faither before him — a righteous neighbour and as good and lawful a subject as any amongst us!"

CHAPTER XVII

'GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS . . .'

INTO the still heart of the dead, when unexpected discovery surprised him and the certainty of Benjamin Gun's capture or destruction became apparent, there had sprung a thought, and upon that thought, during the brief moments between his fight and death, he had acted.

But it was not until long afterwards that the significance of the deed became apparent to those most interested therein, for while soldiers and turnkeys clustered about a corpse the escaped prisoner had obeyed Bolt's direction and made good his escape. By the time the startled pursuers had recollected themselves and continued their quest for the runaway, he was safe and beyond their reach.

Gun kept steadily northward with the Pole Star to guide him and, in half an hour, the black mass of a winter wood showed beneath the high ground whither he had come. Now his course was clear and he knew how to follow it. He descended into the darkness of beech and pine, crept among the tree trunks, and came presently to a river that ran glimmering through the midst of trees. The moonlight fell perpendicularly through the network of many boughs; here shone ghostly on branch and bole, here lit upon the mossy granite boulders that blocked the water and sent it spouting to right and left; here touched the river where,

like a mass of silver, the waters foamed and sang to break the silence. He followed the Bair Down brook upwards step by step, and anon, when the steepness of the woods abated and a meadow stretched by streamside, he saw his goal — a little bridge of rough-hewed granite spanning the stream where a pack-horse track crossed it at right angles. Hither came the man and flung himself down exhausted on a bed of moss and dried leaves to wait for Charity.

But she was there before him; a grey shadow slipped out from among the tree stems and found herself in her sailor's arms with his panting heart against her own.

Heart to heart indeed they remained awhile, and listened to the sounds of the night; but all spoke of peace; no shout of man or murmur of pursuit broke upon their ears. They heard nothing save the throb of their own pulses and the song of the river, sunk to a sigh, where her waters dawdled in a pool that mirrored the white moon.

They delayed only for Gun to fetch his breath, then, by a secluded path known to Charity, they moved together towards her home; and Benjamin explained the things that had happened — so far as he understood them.

"All went well till I met the farmer. He was there sure enough, and had opened the grating in the outer wall and come up nearly half a mile to the place where I got down into the trench. Then the luck of Satan fell, for the sentry came straight on to his beat and found my wires almost before my hands had left 'em. A rumpus broke out almost the moment after I dropped in the trench, and before we 'd fairly got under way the redcoats was after us. The game was blown; but a rum

thing happened afore we started. 'My coat, for the Lord's sake!' says Bolt. 'I 'm frozen to death waiting here.' It seemed a queer time and place to ask for it, and first, God forgive me, I began to wonder if, after all, he 'd gone back on me again, and meant to get a rise out of me that would end with a dozen musket balls; but the man was true as gold. Off we went and I whipped off his coat and he got in it, just as we heard the sojers at the double behind us and their officer shout to 'em to run us down. Then says Bolt, as we ran, 'Keep along the wall till you come to the leat that takes the water into the prison; then go under the bank for a hundred yards and then, if all 's still, strike out into the Moor and head northeast for Bair Down Wood.' So there it was; and next thing that happened was me tripping and falling on my nose like a derned babby. Yes, I tripped and dropped and let them up, Lord knows how much nearer, afore I was running again. We got to the grating ahead though, but not by much, for they was a lot quicker on their feet than us. Then through I went and Bolt after me; and I followed his words and kept by the wall and ran, as I never ran afore or shall again. Soon I heard a voice bellow out, 'Stop! Stop! Or I fire on you!' 'T was the officer with the men; but I did n't turn my head: I held on for dear life, hoping they 'd miss me in the dark shadow. Then I heard the 'Ready! Present!' and on I went, wondering, in a dazed sort of way, if they was going to hit or miss. 'Fire!' sings out the soldier, and their metal gave tongue and I prayed a sort of a prayer that the luck would be o' my side for once. And so it was, my blessed gal, for nary a scratch hev I gotten; I did n't even hear a ball go near enough to comb my hair! 'T was like a dream, and for a bit I thought I must surely

be hit somewhere; and then I thought that maybe I was dead and 't was only the spectrum of me still running along! But I soon found I was alive, for I got to the water leat and kept along under the bank in the water for fifty yard, and the cold told me I were n't no ghost. And here I am, right as nine-pence and hungry as a sea-gull; and come peace and liberty, I 'll pay that fine, brave chap for his pluck and his goodness if I have to work for him with these hands for twenty year."

She listened breathless.

"He said he 'd live to make me love him, and he 's done it," she said. "His name will be in my heart for evermore, and only less precious to me than yours, my own darling Ben!"

Again he kissed her and drew a long, weary sigh. They walked together, and she told him what had been planned; but he was too happy yet to care for details of the future.

"Lordy! I could sing and shout for joy with the morning stars," he said. "Ah! who knows the taste of liberty — the full sweet taste — but prisoners and captives? Free — free — to think of it! Free as the running water yonder, and the clouds in the sky and the stars above. Hark to yonder night-bird! He 's giving me welcome! Never — never will I be taken alive no more, Charity."

"Don't make such a terrible noise, else you 'll fright more than the owls," she said. "I could sing too, Ben, but 't would n't be a very clever thing to wake my father. 'Take you?' No, that they never shall no more; but you must go quiet and bide quiet, my own dear, for father's but a bad sleeper and if he hears voices he 'll think 't is

Blackadder and Workman come upon us for his money."

They moved stealthily along to another grove of trees which stood at the top of the hill and shielded Bair Down farm from the violence of the west wind.

"There was talk of peace proclaimed in the prisons yesterday" he told her. "No doubt 't is coming very near now. And the sooner the better, for if it don't happen pretty spry, 't will be of little account for my poor countrymen. Death is bringing peace to them in scores, and smallpox and starvation treat 'em kinder than the English. However came such a country to breed the likes of you?"

"Here 's my home," she said, — "and your home, too, please God. 'T was Richard's thought to put you here, for he knows the runs of Bair Down very well."

They came to a large barn that stood fifty yards from the main dwelling. It was a building with strong walls and a heavy thatch of rushes. Below were cow stalls in which kine now reposed, and made the place very warm with their sweet breathing; aloft, approached by a wooden ladder, there opened a large, unlighted chamber under the roof. Here many things were stored, and along one side, pressed against the thatch above, stood trusses of hay and a double row of sacks full of corn. They climbed into this loft after unlocking the byre beneath; then Charity lighted a lantern and, going forward, showed Gun where he must hide himself. She pulled a sack aside and then another behind it. Whereupon appeared a snug nest of fern that she had made.

"For the present you must bide here by day and take your walks abroad by night," she said. "Father never comes up here, and the man but seldom. But 't is known I often run up for potatoes, or the grain stored yonder.

So, if all goes well, us shall see one another pretty oft between day and night; and come night I 'll bring you your food, Ben — don't fear you 'll ever go hungry."

"I 'll go hungry when you are n't there," he said. "You 're my food, and so long as you are by my side I 'll want naught else."

She shook her head.

"You 'd soon be leery[1] if you lived on love o' me," she declared. "But here 's what 'll be better than love after all you 've suffered. I 've stored your corner for the last three days — here a little and there a little. You look under the fern yonder when I be gone and you 'll find enough to feed a pack of hounds. And a lot of pretty drinking, too."

"You wonder, you wonder!" he said; "but can't you stop and share it?"

"Nay — I must in. We 're early birds and rise afore dawn. 'T is market-day at prison to-morrow, and I must be there. What questions they 'll ask with their eyes, Ben!"

"Ha, ha!" he chuckled.

"And for mercy's sake be clever with the lantern and put it out very careful afore you go to sleep. You won't see me afore half after ten to-morrow night; then, if all 's safe, I 'll come and let you out for a run! Now I must be gone. And you shall have a pipe of tobacco to-morrow too, if I can manage it."

She crept away, hot from his kisses, locked the barn from outside, and returned to the farm. Her mother, who lay awake by sleeping Jacko's side, had not dared to take any active part in the night's work, but she waited through the endless hours for a promised sign

[1] *Leery.* Hungry.

that all was well. Now it came — a little scratch, like a mouse, on the door — and she knew that Charity was safely home again, and went to sleep very thankfully.

Elsewhere Benjamin Gun made an enormous meal, then extinguished his lantern, rolled over in the sweet fern, and slept as he had not slept for many a night. His nature was a child's. He lived in the future, and now all that had passed slipped from him like a worn-out mantle, for his eyes were on the dawn of great tomorrows.

It was light before he wakened, to find a glimmer of red morning sunshine stealing between the chinks of the reeded roof. He peeped out from behind his sacks and heard beneath him the dull drumming of milk that spurted alternately from a cow's dugs into a pail. He found presently a little aperture through which he could look out on to the Moor, and observed that trees came near to the side of the barn upon which he was hidden. Much food remained over from his supper, and now he ate and drank again and longed for the night to come, when Charity would steal to his side. He slept for some hours more, and dreamed of meeting Richard Bolt; then he woke with a start, for somebody was near The trap-door, which covered the top of the ladder, had been thrown open and a shaft of blue daylight shot up from below to illuminate the great loft.

Gun peeped forth very cautiously; then, to his surprise, heard himself gently called in a woman's voice. But it was not Charity: her mother, Mary Caunter, had climbed to the loft, and now, with eyes made large to see in the darkness, peered about for the hidden sailor.

He knew that she was on his side, and crept forth cautiously. She looked him up and down with some emotion; then she shook his extended hand.

"So they 've brought you off, Benjamin? And at cruel cost too. Look to it that neither me nor mine shall ever have cause to curse this day."

"I will, mother," he answered, earnestly. "God judge me if you shan't live to bless what fell out last night. And if you don't, may I have my portion in the eternal fires."

"Us 'll hope you 'll prove as strong as your words. If ever you have but one child, and that a headstrong darter, you 'll know what I 've been through."

"You 've got a son as well now — a son as 'll toil day and night for you and leave no stone unturned to better you."

She sighed, and sat down upon a sack near him. He noticed that her face was haggard and her eyes tear-stained.

"The Lord knows what 'll come of this; and 't is well you should know what has come of it so far, for seemingly you do not. I spoke with Cherry this morning before she went to market, and she had heard nothing. But hear she must up along, and 't will be a facer."

"I can't guess at your meaning," he said. "Has any harm fallen on any you cared about?"

"Ess fay — if death is harm. I 'm here to tell you, for master have gone to Tavistock and all 's safe for an hour or two. Only at midday did I hear tell of the trouble — down to the *Ring o' Bells* — in the valley beneath here over the river. And even as Mr. Trinny told me the fatal news, there comed men down over the h[illegible]ch a 'truckamuck,' or sledge, as you 'd call it. And

there he lay — Richard Bolt — shot dead by the soldiers last night. They was taking him to his home, and it seemed that, one way and another, they 'd come to a pretty just guess at what really fell out. With what you told Cherry and what I 've just heard, I see all — only too bitter clear. The turnkeys knew that you and poor Richard made up your quarrel and were thick of late; and they knew that you were n't a man to bide like a sheep in prison after your taste of freedom. 'T was clear he had helped to get you off and then, when it came to the end, he saw that end from the beginning of the dash for liberty. He saw that end when he axed for his coat again, because well he knew that 't was the coat would draw the bullets. He knowed at the finish 't was any odds against you escaping, and so he did what he did."

All had happened as Mrs. Caunter said, and the dead master of Dart Hollow returned to his home upon a bier without wheels; for in those days no ordinary vehicles crossed the Moor save by the solitary high-road. Heavy goods were dragged on sledges; strings of pack-horses tramped the wilderness, and women usually went on pillions behind their men-folk. The company had crept slowly down to Western Dart, delayed awhile to drink at the *Ring o' Bells*, and then proceeded with their burden to the distant farm. They had crossed Cherrybrook, climbed the long hills beneath Bellaford Tor, and so, at last, reached Dart Hollow.

Benjamin Gun received this tragic story in all its particulars; then his manhood seemed to dissolve awhile: he covered his face with his hands and wept.

Mrs. Caunter left him soon, to think upon what had happened, and almost immediately afterwards Charity

herself came up from the farm. Upon hearing the news at the prison she had left her stall in the keeping of another, and returned home overwhelmed with distress.

The lovers tried to comfort each other, but they could not. The significance of the tragedy burnt into them like the remorse that follows upon guilt.

"For you and me he laid down his fine life — for your happiness, Charity. He said once that he'd make you love him — little he knew how true would fall the words he spoke!"

She yet lacked knowledge of all particulars, but now her lover made them clear.

"'T was his life or yours then?"

"So he thought, and so he acted. Gone — gone for ever, and maybe glad to go. How light it looks now! How pitiful my work in the past afore work like that! You chose wrong, sweetheart; for he was a thousand times a greater and better and braver man than me. Took his sure death in that grey coat and put it on his shoulders with his own hand — then went out into the open and let me keep hid. Loved you big enough and deep enough to die for me! God, He knows that I'd have waited and starved in yonder stone hell for fifty years before such a man should have fallen so."

Charity shed many tears, and he comforted her as well as he could. But his own heart was faint, and his sorrow extreme. He had thought of little else but Richard; he had plotted how to repay his friend; he had planned a thousand seemly actions in the future, when the peace should come. But now all was futile; for the doubtful blessing of liberty at this moment he had paid this price; and Richard Bolt would never hear his thanks, never

receive his blessing, never know the deep fountain of gratitude that bubbled in his breast.

"He 's well enough — 't is us that are unhappy and shall be clouded to our graves," the sailor said. "Dick 's cheerful and joyous with a grand deed, bravely done, and all heaven afore him to roam in. But us ——"

"Ah! there 's no place in heaven sweeter than where such as him walk," sobbed the girl.

"'T is so — he 'll meet many a good chap he knew in the prisons. He 's laid down his life for his friends and he 'll take it up again in the properest part of Kingdom Come. He 's earned the very best! And for us — we 'll bless his name whilst we live and pray God the chance will happen to thank him when we die."

Long they spoke together, and presently it was the man who found emotion drowning his simple heart, while the girl dried her tears and strove to comfort him as he had comforted her. He became indifferent to his own fate and vowed that this tragedy must darken his life for evermore. He felt in a measure the murderer of a good man. Common-sense had little part in the sailor's character, and now an inclination awoke in him to return to prison, to give himself up, and suffer again.

"'T is only by more and more suffering I 'll get peace now," he said.

But Charity argued with him, reminded him that it was for his salvation and her happiness that the dead man had given his life, proved to him that Richard Bolt's sacrifice must be all in vain if he refused to profit by it now.

"There be long, long days of patient hiding and cruel waiting afore you, Ben," she said. "I know you, and I know you 'll suffer enough; don't fear you 'll not

suffer. 'T is right that we both should, if we 've got hearts in our bodies. We 'll suffer, and we 'll pray long prayers and ask deep blessings on that just man."

" 'T is cruel, cruel fate to be debtor to the dead," he answered.

And then Mary Caunter looked up through the hatch of the ladder and bade her daughter descend.

" Come down, Cherry, and you go in your den, Benjamin, for the master will be home ere long," she said. Then she added an item of news.

" I 've just heard from Samuel Parsons that the crowner sits to-morrow and that poor Richard is to lie to Postbridge. His reverence, Mr. Godolphin, be going to do the burying, and no doubt the country-side will turn out. And there 's hue and cry for you, Benjamin; but the opinion is that you be lost in mid Moor and won't never be seen again."

She spoke the truth, and five days later not less than a hundred humble folk assembled beside the grave of Richard Bolt, while Septimus Godolphin, who guessed no little of the truth, read the burial service over him.

The farmer's action, as most other human actions, offered matter for much debate; and some had nothing but censure for it, while others held the man in praise. His real motive was known to few, yet a time came presently, after the war was ended, the War Prison empty, and the world at peace, when a memorial rose above Richard's mound, and the significance of his death was set thereon by loving hearts for all to read.

On a slate, now sunk from the perpendicular, and mottled with the gold and ebony of ancient lichens, the ghost of a cherub still puffs his cheeks at a trumpet, the shadow of a skull and crossbones may still be discerned

by eyes skilled in reading such old-time registers of the dead. And the story of the dust beneath is yet legible, despite the green moss that fills the letters, and the dark earth that obscures a part of them.

"HERE LYETH THE BODY OF
RICHARD BOLT, YEOMAN
OF THIS PSH, WHO DEPARTED THIS
LIFE IN THE TWENTY-NINTH YEAR OF HIS AGE.
ON THE 5TH DAY OF
JANUARY, 1815.
'Greater love hath no man than this—'"

The remainder cannot be deciphered, yet wakes to vivid life again in the spirits of those who read and comprehend.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHEREIN TWO OLD MEN FIND THEMSELVES NOT TOO OLD TO LEARN

THERE came a day of solemn significance and general interest to Prince Town. The church of St. Michael and All Angels was completed, and the bishop of the diocese had undertaken to perform the rite of dedication. Largely the work of French and American prisoners, the building dominated the hill whereon Prince Town lies, and its tower, now one hundred years of age, still stands to battle with the storms of winter and lift a landmark for successive generations of men.

A considerable number of persons from the county assembled to do honour to the bishop and the occasion; while from the War Prison certain distinguished men of the United States Navy, who had been interested in the church, were also present, with the Commandant and other officers. Many of the local clergy from considerable distances had assembled to attend the ceremony, and luncheon was spread for a select party at the Duchy Hotel.

Some fifty persons waited in the historic inn for their prelate, and among them were General Sir Archer Godolphin, his daughter Miranda, and his brother, the clergyman.

Of Sir Archer it may be said that fate and sorrow had served a little to soften his outlook upon life. Even the

folk noticed it, and they whispered among themselves that the master of Prince Hall must be breaking up. But though indeed his health had suffered under the cruel treatment he had received at the highwaymen's hands, a temporary feebleness was not entirely responsible for his gentler attitude to others. Aged indeed he had become by the deep grief of his son's departure, but with this terrible blow, that stunned him for a season, some measure of enlightenment had dawned. Through long, sleepless nights the old man wrestled with the problems of existence; and by day he had lent a patient ear to his more temperate and broad-minded brother. Miranda had also played her part, and finding her father better tuned to listen than of old, had spoken for Felix, prayed that he might come home again, herself offered to go into the world and seek him. The old man, whose own hope was dead, loved to hear the sanguine girl. He could not believe that his son would ever return to him, but he told himself that, did Felix return, he would listen, behave soberly, and strive to see the problems of life from the younger's point of view, so that he might the better combat his son's error. Slowly, bitterly, it dawned upon him, as it must ever dawn upon the aged, that the old order changes and that those who inherit the power and dominion — the coming generation — must change with it. Sir Archer's ideas might stand still and his opinions petrify; but that would not prevent new ideas from attracting mankind and new opinions from guiding the future conduct of the race. The tide cannot be arrested, but it may be harnessed to good purpose.

It was typical of this modification in his former attitude, and a circumstance of almost pathetic significance, that when the Reverend Septimus Godolphin proposed

to present certain of the leaders among the Americans to Sir Archer, the old soldier raised no objection. Half a dozen were introduced to him, and they treated the veteran with respect and kindness. They listened to his remarks, ventured to modify certain of his conclusions, and showed him, in the space of half an hour, what, until now, he had refused to admit or believe. Here were men as famous and as wise as himself. Their knowledge, their honour, their immense patience under the stern necessities of war — these high qualities impressed the Englishman not a little.

Then Miranda's heart leaped to her lips, for Robert Burgoyne was introduced to Sir Archer, and, after they had spoken a few words together, her father beckoned to the girl. In a maze of mingled fear and gladness, she went forward and shook Burgoyne's hand.

"You have a stout admirer in my maiden, young gentleman," said Sir Archer; "for since she came hither with my reverend brother, she hath gone over heart and soul to your country — a very traitor, I assure you. You must have used honeyed words to win her so completely."

"She has been more than good," answered Burgoyne, who was also secretly moved. He hated deception, and burned sailor-fashion to tell his story, declare his love, and beg the father's friendship. But the time for that was far away.

They spoke gently together, and the young man listened, not without admiration, to much that the elder said. Burgoyne's courteous bearing, his knowledge, and distinction of manner could not be ignored by Sir Archer. The American had intellect, as he soon found; he was not a mere patriot; for no fevered passion had he plunged

into the war, or called upon his vast private resources and fitted out a privateer, that had rendered heavy account of herself until sunk by odds. It was from a burning sense of honour and of justice, with much thought and in deep grief at the need, that Burgoyne had taken up arms against the mother country in the name of human liberty and the rights of man.

"Speak for yourself, Master Burgoyne," said Sir Archer presently. "You have heard an old soldier long enough, and you have listened very patiently for so famous a fire-eater as you are esteemed to be."

The other shook his head.

"No sane man eats fire for choice, or forces his fellowman to do so. We are 'sons of dust and sorrow' here, as the poet hath it, and each dark day I find myself mourning another faithful friend. I am but now come from the death-bed of one who fought with me and was rescued with me when my ship sank. Charley Miller was his name. He has gone; Petersen, the Placid, a rare fellow full of wisdom — he has gone also; and Tom Midge and little Jack Wood — all gone. The survivors are few of that brave ship's company."

He had been talking more to himself than his listeners, and now turned to Miranda.

"Forgive me, but my spirit is heavy. I shall have to face some broken-hearted women when I go back to my own country. War is a dark mystery. Who shall say that they understand the instincts that set one human being at the throat of his fellow? Has not the intellect of man arrived at such a pitch that it can settle the differences of nations without shedding innocent blood?"

"It has not, and never shall," answered General Sir Archer. "Jehovah is a God of Battles and, had you

studied war as I have studied it; had you seen the divine sword ever lifted on the side of right, you would perceive that carnage was instituted by Him even as earthquake, pestilence, and famine. These are His dark angels and do His bidding. Their purposes are hidden from the hireling, the weakling, the irreligious, and the fools; but to me and to those who bend the knee in humility and understanding, all that the Lord of Hosts hath wrought among men is for the advantage and salvation of men."

Burgoyne bowed his head, but did not answer.

"There stands an ancient sundial in my garden," continued Sir Archer, "and round about the gnomon are graven these words, 'Lex Dei, Lux Diei.' The law of God is the light of day. It is only by shutting our eyes to the law of God that we frail beings make a night of our days and wander helpless, homeless, hopeless through this hard pilgrimage."

"You have the faith which moves mountains," answered the younger, "and yet it has been your fate also to stand puzzled before the mysterious ways of God and confess your human limitations and inability to understand."

"I do not deny that. It seems that you know my brother well and he entertains a high esteem of you. My Miranda, too, you are come acquainted with. It may be, then, that when you say I also have to face the shadow which so often hides heaven's countenance from earth, that you know of our greatest sorrow and grief? My son——"

"I have heard a little, General; but out of your own mouth perhaps a stranger may presume to comfort you. Do not deny him the light of day. Indeed, he has it. My privilege it was to meet him here before he left you.

We spoke together; we fired each other. He is your son, only he stands farther along the road of progress than you can. He may be on dangerous ground, on ground that will not prove any sure support to his principles; he may be taking a perilous path to a noble goal; for the noblest goals are reached by the most dangerous ways. But his heart is high, and if his ambitions are futile, they are not base. You would rather that he flew toward the sun than remained content to creep on the earth for fear of the dangers of the air."

Thus he spoke to assuage the other's increasing doubts. He knew better than Sir Archer the follies that Felix had desired to commit, but he also remembered the youth himself, the poet's fire in his face, the poet's aspirations that had led him to fling up his home and friends.

They spoke of their countries, and Sir Archer censured the American constitution as a bastard thing founded on no sure tradition. Burgoyne admitted his country's charter was not ideal, but held that it would grow to perfection in process of time.

"It contains the seeds of liberty and, therefore, of immortality," he declared. "For myself, I advocate neither democracy nor bureaucracy but, in the ancient and classical understanding, 'Timocracy'—a pursuit of honour for its own precious sake—a constitution founded upon the great principle that the honour of the State must be paramount and outweigh every other consideration whatsoever."

"The King is the State," asserted Sir Archer, but the younger would not allow this.

"With your pardon, no, General. He is no more the State than our President is the State. Monarchs

and rulers are no longer the chosen of the Almighty as of old. At any rate monarchs can be no longer so, since man has relied on the system of heredity for his kings. Men are men, though we call them kings or presidents, emperors or moguls. Their honour lies in their own hands, and no nation can degrade or uplift its sovereign below or above himself. But the State is the Nation, and what I understand by national honour is an ideal conceivably superior to that of party method or constitutional order. Who should know better what I mean than you, a soldier of renown? You understand what is meant by the honour of a regiment; then, equally, you will comprehend what I mean by the honour of a race."

Herein were many sentiments that Sir Archer approved, and not a few that he rejected with energy; but the circumstance that delighted the listening girl was this: her father had met, tolerated, and even admired Robert Burgoyne. She could scarcely conceal the joy which filled her soul. She could have sung with delight to mark her father's animation. She built castles in the air, while she stood beside Sir Archer and listened to the argument gently passed backwards and forwards. There was no heat, and Burgoyne conducted his case with such modesty and simplicity of manner that the old soldier forgave his heresies and believed himself well able to reform the American's errors of mind, given sufficient opportunity.

They were still talking when the Reverend Septimus Godolphin came forward and interrupted his brother.

"At last," he said, "his Grace's carriage is reported climbing the hill from Ockery Bridge. He is two hours late, and has had a rough journey from Moreton.

I fear. He will be hungry and thirsty and weary, too."

The episcopal coach with its outrider appeared, and a red face, framed in white whiskers, looked out of the window. Then the door was thrown open and there descended the bishop's chaplain, a burly man with an enormously high forehead, prominent nose, and still more prominent teeth. He was pale, and apparently suffering from some recent emotion.

"A terrible adventure, a terrible adventure!" he said. "In broad daylight upon the heart of this inhospitable wilderness! It beggars belief, it beggars belief!"

He offered the bishop his hand, but it was refused.

"Nay, my dear Westonhaugh, you need support more than I, for you suffered more than I. Welcome, friends!" he added, shaking the hands of General Sir Archer and his brother. "Yes, let me tell you, that you are not the first to receive us upon Dartmoor."

The speaker was small and stout, with a round, cleanshorn face.

The little man beamed and his eyes twinkled.

"Never," he said, "never, since I read the *Athenaeum* review of my 'Hagiology of Cornwall,' have I enjoyed quite such an exciting moment as recently in the desert yonder. Exciting moments are rare in the life of a bishop. In a word, the notorious pair of highwaymen, Blackadder and Workman — the rascals — everything — everything but my episcopal ring and my robes! And poor Westonhaugh there had ten guineas in gold upon him and a present for his daughter at Plymouth — a necklace of gold and corals — gone!"

He laughed heartily, as though it had seldom fallen to his lot to enjoy a better joke.

"Tell them, tell them how it befell," he said to his chaplain, and then he turned to the Godolphins.

"'T is no small thing, mark you, for such an old man as I to experience an entirely new sensation! Never — never before have I so much as seen a highwayman! To be stopped by one — to meet the famed Blackadder face to face, look into his remarkable eyes, study the character of his countenance, mark the steely muscles of his rat-trap mouth!"

"And empty your pockets for him — do not forget that, my lord," said the woebegone chaplain.

"Tush, my dear fellow, it was worth it. Moreover, he meant every word he said. I have not a doubt that, bishop of the diocese though I am, the picturesque scoundrel would have blown my brains out had I showed fight. It is something, mark you, to meet a man who has the power and courage to blow your brains out!"

"They galloped from thin air as it seemed," began the tall clergyman. "One moment we were alone, threading the interminable solitude; the next, a horseman appeared as if by magic at either window. Our postilions were told to stop, and the hideous muzzle of a firearm protruded into the coach. 'It grieves me to delay one in the direct apostolic succession,' said a deep voice, 'but life is full of these mysteries, and since the Lord is well known to look after His own, such crumbs as your lordship may be disposed to fling to us sparrows will not be lost. 'Sparrows!' answered his Grace. 'Call yourselves sparrow-hawks, my friends, for we are the sparrows, I'm fearing!' 'So be it,' answered the robber. 'But bear in mind the text that tells you no sparrow falls to the ground without divine knowledge.' Then the smaller rascal, Will Workman, reminded the bishop

that he had confirmed him some twenty years earlier in his career. 'And I 've never regretted it and never been one penny the worse!' said the scamp. After that spoke the leader, Blackadder. 'As one descended from royal Irish blood,' he began, 'I know how to do honour to a prince of the Church; and I hope, if prosperity ever overtakes me, I shall be privileged to return with a royal addition any little loan your Grace of Devon and Cornwall may be disposed to contribute to the needs of a good man labouring under adversity.' 'T was like play-acting, and for a moment I felt the whole situation unreal and of the theatre. But they convinced us speedily that it was a play of real, grim life. Their eyes were everywhere and they were not alone. Upon a bluff, some two hundred yards from the road, stood a third horseman, on the watch. It is monstrous, mediæval, an incident of the Dark Ages! My nerve — never good — has been unstrung to a point when ——"

"Never mind your nerve, my dear fellow," cried the bishop. "Consider the joy of such an experience! They were attired in good clothes and had gold lace on their hats. Their faces were hidden to the mouth. 'Your money and trifles of value, I must beg, my lord,' says Blackadder. 'And let it be a slight consolation to know that you are aiding a man whose ancestors hobnobbed with the Irish saints!' And not a twitch of a muscle, not a twinkle of eye. Marvellous! But the other rogue laughed, and said that he knew not churchmen were so well to do, and must make a note of it. That was when Westonhaugh handed him his purse with ten guineas therein. 'You will be far better without this dross, reverend sir,' said the scoundrel. 'Believe

me, parson, filthy lucre is but a ceaseless snare and a temptation. We men of clay understand it; it hath for us the fascination of kinship, since gold is but glorified earth, even as we are; but your treasure is where thieves cannot break through and steal!' My dear Westonhaugh, I love you, but I had rather sacrificed my love than not laugh at your face when the man spoke thus to you!"

But the chaplain still failed to find any humour in his adventure.

"'Tis said that Englishmen take their pleasure sadly, my lord," he retorted. "And for my part, though held not dead to the better sort of fun, I have yet to see that the word of God, quoted for his own purposes by a devil of a highwayman, is matter for much laughter."

"You have not got over the actual loss yet," answered the bishop. "But you will live to laugh over it when time has softened the pang."

"When the blackguards are hanged — not sooner, my lord," answered the chaplain.

Whereon the prelate sighed.

"Poor fellows — like enough they 'll come to the rope. When they had emptied my pockets they asked for the ring; but there I withstood them and drummed into their heads its immense and sacred significance. Westonhaugh will bear me out that they abandoned their claim with the very refinement of courtesy. They complimented me and congratulated the see! 'I have been privileged to know few of the fathers of Holy Church,' said Blackadder, 'but if among them exist many such high-minded, generous, and kind-hearted gentlemen as yourself, then one has a right to feel very hopeful for the morals of the country!' And he swept off his hat

like a lord. Then, turning to Westonhaugh, they told him he must never expect to become a bishop, since he was a man of inferior calibre without the heart or the pluck to hold highest office! 'A chaplain you are, and a chaplain you must be content to remain,' said Workman. Alas! I fear I laughed at your indignation, my dear Westonhaugh, but well you know that my amusement was harmless."

"Come, your Grace, you must be starved. Let us to luncheon. Indeed, it is necessary that we proceed apace, for the days are short, and daylight will fail us," said Septimus Godolphin. "I, too, and my brother also, have been the sport of these misguided wretches."

"They asked for my blessing," continued the bishop, who could not, apparently, put his great adventure out of his mind. "They took off their hats and begged me as a favour to bless them; but I refused. 'Not so, bad men!' I answered. 'Even a bishop must draw the line somewhere. No blessing shall you have of me, but a warning rather to amend your lives and ——' At this point, however, they ceased to show any interest. 'I prithee, be not serious, bishop,' says the lesser man. 'We like to take life laughing. Remember us kindly. We mean well. Blackadder here is the most generous of creatures and does good by stealth quite as often as he does harm in the same fashion.' Then strikes in the other. 'And my old friend, Will Workman, hath a heart of gold, bishop. His charities would amaze you, and if, by force of circumstances, he makes a handsome woman a widow, he is ever ready to take her husband's place!' The dogs grew scurrilous then, and I pulled up the window. 'Drive on!' cried Blackadder to the postilions, and 'Ta-ta, Exon!' says Workman to me.

And to you what was their last word, my dear chaplain?"

"I beg you will not repeat it," answered Mr. Westonhaugh hotly, while the bishop recollected, and put his hand over his mouth.

"Not for the world, not for the world!" he said, and his face grew red again with secret merriment.

At luncheon the old man continued to be very full of the robbers. Occasionally he stopped eating and made notes in a little book, that he might forget no detail for his wife. "'T will be held by many the most interesting chapter in my autobiography," he said. "I would not have missed them for thrice the money!"

Not until he found himself arrayed in his robes did the little man grow serious again. Then, in the fading light of winter afternoon, he performed the ceremony of dedication, and delivered an address at once pathetic and dignified. He dwelt on the alien hands that had raised this memorial to their Maker; spoke of the deep blood ties that had ever held England and America together; hesitated not to blame the mother-land for her insensate folly in breaking those ties through greed and passion; thanked God that the angel of peace had already spread her wings for flight to earth; and prayed that henceforth the countries, now separated for ever, might make war upon each other no more but, still united by bonds higher than those of earth, battle side by side in the spirit against the powers of evil and for the advancement of humanity.

"Let us war as St. Michael and the angels warred!" cried the little man — little no longer, for his presence seemed to expand and bulk imposing, even as his silver voice rang aloft into the naked waggon roof above him

and echoed musical from the walls of stone. "Let us prove faithful soldiers and servants of our Master, and unite to advance the happiness of a sad world, and to increase the goodness of a wicked one. Let us form part of a universal humanity, whose country is not America, not England, but the whole earth; let us prove warriors of might in an army whose flag is neither the Union Jack nor the Stars and Stripes; let us pray and labour, shoulder to shoulder, high and low, rich and poor, all kindred, all fellow-citizens of the blessed world our Saviour came to save."

The bishop slept at Prince Hall that night, and after dinner, over a bottle of classic port and a 'church-warden' that he permitted himself to smoke, the little man retailed the entire story of his adventures and made further memoranda in his note-book, as fresh items flashed back to his memory.

Sir Archer had thought to take him to task concerning certain statements in his sermon; but he changed his mind.

"I, too, have heard things and faced opinions that were new to me to-day," he said. "In truth, it would seem that even we old fellows are not grown too old to learn."

"Faith! no, General," answered the bishop. "When that happens, we are grown too old to teach also."

CHAPTER XIX

JACKO CAUNTER TRUSTS NO MAN

IN the event but languid search was made after Benjamin Gun, for despite Commandant Short's exertions, the faulty discipline of the past was not retrieved. The turnkeys and military guard were out of hand; it was natural, therefore, that the prisoners should be. Other difficulties and disorders, with rumour of concerted action from without, soon caused the sailor's name to be forgotten in the prisons; but the longed-for news had yet to come and, with it, the last tragedy that wrote the final chapter of the War Prison's history in blood.

The runaway was safe enough, and none guessed at his retreat. For a long time he mourned the dead, and his sweetheart, when she came to Benjamin by night, shed secret tears at the fate his own heroism had brought upon her friend; but life remained — life and love — and the thousand problems they brought with them to her and the hidden sailor. He was impatient, and longed to come forth and beard Mr. Caunter, but the women, who knew Jacko better, would not yet suffer it.

"You 've got to reckon with my master, sure enough, and nobody knows it better than me," said Mary Caunter, "but 't is madness to ruin all by facing him before we 've got the road a bit smoother. 'T will take everything you know and a bit over to make him your friend. He hates the name of you folk, and he 'd give any of you

up to the soldiers behind your backs and take the guineas with a cheerful heart. Ess fay, and his conscience would n't prick him neither, for he 'd reckon he did the State good sarvice!"

"I 'll be a match for the man," vowed Benjamin. "This gal's father must have a bit of the right stuff in him, ma'am. I 'm only a rough and ready sailor, with little enough gumption, I reckon, but I 'll come around him! I 'll soon show him what a handy varmint I am about a place. Why, I can turn to anything a'most but book larning. I tell you he 'll think a derned lot of me in a month, if he 's only patient at the onset."

"That 's just exactly what he won't be, and you need n't count upon it," answered Jacko's wife. "Patience never did belong to him and never will. The first moment he hears that you are inside his gates, he 'll away to the War Prisons and tell 'em to send the redcoats for 'e."

"Then 't is I must be patient," said Ben mournfully. "Patient willy-nilly, because there 's no other way. And with you dear, blessed creatures o' my side 't will be possible, no doubt, though a vartue I never practised afore. I 'll lie doggo by day and take the air by night. And my Cherry have got to bring me bit and sup, like the ravens for the prophet; though I lay they never brought him such pretty eating as she brings me. I 'm getting that fat that my prison rags are bursting off me, like the sheath off the blooming rose! But come the peace and Cap'n Burgoyne's promise made good, then she 'll have her rich reward — and you too, mother."

"We be paving the way for the news and seeking to make father take a kinder view of your country," said Ben's sweetheart. "'T is uphill work; but we stick to

him. Mother tried father last night, but he was n't in a very amiable temper, along of losing a pony, and he broke out raging and said he wished we could sink Ameriky under the ocean and everybody as lived there!"

"Don't you wherrit about him, my honey," answered Mr. Gun. "'T will all come right, I do assure you. Your father is n't the only narrow-minded, one-horse silly Britisher that hev a down on us Americans. He don't know better, and has been taught to think wrong. There 's lots more with less excuse than him, because they 've been better eggicated than what he hev. But he 'll live to understand presently, and see our side, and larn to give and take. We 've taught England a good bit this last few years that 't was more 'n time she knew."

But the meeting between Mr. Caunter and Benjamin Gun was long delayed and, though his impatience grew, he could only obey the women and bend to their superior knowledge. Charity and her mother attended prison market as usual, and sometimes the girl brought a letter to Ben from his mess-mates; sometimes she carried one to them from him.

The sailors in No. 4 chaffed Charity about her lover, and the few who were in the secret won some entertainment from listening to those who were not. The latter, little knowing how near the truth their fun approached, asked Mrs. Caunter if she and Cherry had helped Benjamin to run away; and some said that they feared the giant boatswain of the *Vermont* had fled and risked destruction to be rid of his sweetheart; while others suggested that he had made friends with another girl. They condoled with Charity, and the cream of the fun lay with those who knew the truth — Andy Midge, Owen

Seapach, and Robert Burgoyne himself. For he not seldom came into the market also with his remaining messmates, and Charity Caunter was now installed as a pretty regular letter carrier between him and Miranda Godolphin.

Cherry played her part well, under the stream of chaff directed against her, and suggested to the chance observer nothing but a very disappointed and disconsolate maiden, who had lost what she most valued in the world, but was determined to put a good face on h grief and be brave about it. Her friends in secret applauded her.

"A wonder — a born wonder, and too good by long chalks for that son of a Gun you hide so clever," whispered Andy Midge; "but no doubt now you 've gotten him you 'll have to marry him, and 't is any odds that me and Seapach here will dance at your wedding yet afore we get back to our own country!"

It happened, however, that the talk among the market folk was personal on this occasion, and related less to the great question of peace, which, since it would close the markets, they privately viewed with mingled feelings, than to a local scandal and terror. Since stopping the bishop on Bush Down the highwaymen had dared again to break the law in broad daylight.

The county, headed by Sir Archer, was up in arms; concerted action had been taken and systematic search made; but to seek the men in the wild glens and hollows, or among the scattered ruins in Dartmoor, was like looking for a needle in a haystack. Once or twice had they been sighted; but chase always proved futile, and their hiding-places were quite unknown. Then, for a time, it was suspected that, finding the West Country

too hot to hold them longer with safety, they had decamped to their former haunts on Salisbury Plain. Indeed, the folk began to breathe more freely and believe them indeed away, when there came news of another outrage which set the market people chattering and amused their customers to hear.

One of the tenement farms on West Dart, the ancient house of Great Sherberton, not five miles from the War Prison, had been approached in broad daylight and the farmer's wife called upon to yield up her treasures. They proved to be few; but the highwaymen had gone farther, broken open the absent farmer's desk, and helped themselves to three five-pound notes and thirteen pounds in gold. The man, one Ralph Coaker, actually met the robbers on his way home from Ashburton; but knowing them not on their handsome horses and in their fine clothes, he supposed that they were gentlemen of high degree.

"Dang my old wig!" raved Mr. Coaker, when he returned home to hear the evil news; "I capped to the two dogs — I capped to 'em and wished their lordships a very good evening; and the short one threw me a crown — a crown of my own money! — and them with my savings in their pockets and my wife's agate brooch and all the rest — the barefaced rogues!"

Now indeed did the people begin to take their enemies seriously, and none had more to say about them than Jacko Caunter. He was a wealthier man than his neighbours knew or guessed; indeed, he always pleaded poverty; but, none the less, had credit for a reasonable nest-egg. After the outrage at Great Sherberton, Jacko, instead of going twice a week to market towns on market days, stopped at home until the highwaymen should be

caught. "Until they thieves be laid by the heels, I don't budge," he said; "and my hope and prayer is that they 'll pay me a visit. Then I 'll show 'em that we ban't all slack-twisted cowards on Dartymoor, though no doubt they think by now that we are. Here I 'll bide till the scourge be lifted off us, and please God 't will be my brave part to do it." Mr. Caunter looked at his old shot gun, polished the rust off it, loaded it carefully, and took it to bed with him of nights, much to his wife's discomfort; for he insisted on having it within reach of his hand, and often, if a mouse stirred, leapt up to grasp it.

Nor were these his only preparations. Others of great consequence he undertook secretly, and little guessed that certain intricate operations in connexion with his private fortune had been observed and chronicled. Yet so it was, and had Jacko dreamed that his precious hoard was at the mercy of another, his peace of mind must indeed have disappeared. The great secret was not even kept by the discoverer, for members of Mr. Caunter's household were the next to learn of it.

There came a day, while mother and daughter were at prison market as usual, when Benjamin Gun had his first look at the man he so heartily desired for father-in-law. Under exceptional conditions and at very close range did he obtain this view; because the farmer spent no less than an hour in the loft of his barn on the morning in question. His men were ploughing; his women were out of the way, and he chose the occasion for a task of very great delicacy, while Gun, hidden snugly behind the sacks, watched the farmer's movements with amazement. He could scarcely believe that he was not dreaming, and yet, when an opportunity offered to verify

his singular observations, he found them to be correct enough. He told his sweetheart all about it after midnight came and she visited his den; and while he astonished her not a little with his strange news, she was able to explain it, and the causes that led to her father's singular action.

"I was passing the weary time and playing games with the pack o' cards you brought me; and then I watched the sunlight shift along, where it filters through the thatch at one point. I was bored to death, and cruel tempted to break rules and have a pipe to pass the time; but 't was a blessing I did n't, and you may bet your bottom dollar I 'll never be tempted no more. For all of a sudden, in the silence, I heard the ladder creak and felt full of wonder to know who was coming up into the loft at such an unusual hour. Of course the men often work below, where the kine live by night; but 't is n't once in a week they come up here. So I felt anxious for a moment and wondered a lot who it could be and what was wanted. Then the hatch lifted up and a man's head appeared, followed by his carcase. He sat on yon beam and looked round him and frowned, till his eyes got used to the darkness. I 'd never seen him afore, and I can't say I 'd ever seen the like of him either. An old, hatchet-headed, grey-whiskered cuss he was, with jaws like a rat-trap and great black eye-brows over shifty black eyes. His head was bare, and his grey hair was cut very short — so short that it stuck up all over his poll like a brush."

"'T was my father!" said Charity.

She sat by him in his hiding-place, and he talked and smoked his pipe after a good supper. As a rule they went out of doors when she came to him and walked

beside Bair Down river, to a little haunt amid the rocks by the water; but to-night a storm shouted over the Moor and the rain fell fiercely. Therefore she kept him company in his den.

"Ah!" continued Mr. Gun, "I guessed that it must be the old bird; and such eyes as he 've gotten make me shake for myself, because I reckon they could see through a mill-stone or a brick wall, let alone a peck of hay or a bag of oats. But I squatted, still as a hare in her form, and I 'd pulled a good bit of the fern over me at first sound of steps and he suspected nothing. Lordy! if he 'd known that a Yankee was within five yards of him! But he did n't. In fact, he was a darned sight too busy to think of anybody but himself and his own affairs. Mighty queer they was too! You 'll never believe it, I 'm sure; and one thing I will assure you: if I was the sort of rascal he imagines all my nation to be, you would n't find me here to-night so calm and comfortable, Cherry darling!"

"Good powers! Why for not, Ben? You 'd never have touched the old man?"

"N — no. I 'd have let the bird go free, but I might have helped myself to one or two of his golden eggs. Yes, if I was like these here merry blades you tell me about, that stopped the bishop's coach, I should be far off from here at this minute with a thousand pound in my pocket! You stare, and well you may. Be blessed if I thought there was so much money on Dartymoor as that; but that 's the figure — that, and more than that, do lie within six yards of your little foot at this very moment!"

"Ben, what moonshine is this you 're telling? You was dreaming, I reckon. A thousand pound! Why,

father have told mother over and over again that when he 's took there 'll be little more than enough to pay the burial fees. Not that she believed him."

"The sly rogue! Well, you 'll have the laugh of him now, for I can tell you better. Rolling in money — enough to sink a ship, I do assure you! And no dreams neither — I never was the sort to dream — even when I went to sleep — not enough brains for that. All bed-rock truth I tell. Have n't I counted it? Yes; when he 'd laid his nest full of golden eggs and hopped off and did n't come back any more, then I had a look round and amused myself by counting the cash — every coin — a thousand odd in sovereigns! And then, of course, I put 'em all very carefully back in the bags."

"When, when did it happen?"

"I 'm beginning the tale at the wrong end. I 'll tell you how it went from the first. Up goes the trap-door and in comes the master — like a she-cat as wants to find a place for her kittens and feels mighty particular about it, and is n't too easily pleased. He pokes around and rummages and fidgets and considers; and the sweat runs off my back like a river, for every minute I think he 'll thrust in between the sacks and find me. But he don't do that. 'T is the floor that takes his fancy, and presently he comes across a rotten board underfoot not ten yards from where I am hidden. Then he makes a hole, for all the world like a dog that 's going to bury a bone, and now he pricks up his ears and listens, and now he burrows, and now he listens again, and now he burrows again. At last he works down and scratches out a lot of rubbish and finds that the great roof-tree beam of the barn lies hidden. This satisfies him and off he goes. But soon he comes back again with half a dozen little

leather bags. He puts 'em in the hole and then gets half a dozen more. Twice he does this, but his next load is different, for he fetches up a lot of silver spoons and candlesticks and such like. Then journey after journey he makes, but brings very little at a time. The things hid there would fill a shop. I 've sized 'em all up, and wonderful they are. There 's a proper old jewel set in gold, and a pair of pearl ear-rings, and three snuff-boxes that may be silver by the look of 'em."

"The jewel father did use to wear in his neckerchief on Sundays," said Charity. "It belonged to my great-grandfather; and a chap at Plymouth, as he showed it to, said 't was worth six pounds at the least. And the ear-rings once belonged to a lady of quality, who gave them to my grandmother when she married. They be too fine for the likes of us, of course."

"Not too fine for you," said Benjamin, "and if they was made of diamonds and rubies and rainbows they would n't be too fine; and if ever they belong to you, wear 'em you shall!"

"What else — what else did father hide?"

"Naught else. That was his day's work, and a good day's work, too, for an old man. Up and down that ladder he climbed twenty times at the least, and when all was done he fetched a plank to fit the hole, sawed off a bit and slipped it over. Then he turned a truss of hay on top and tidied all and went off very well pleased with his fun. And then, as I tell you, to pass the time till I saw my gal again I made so bold as to hev a look at his treasures. But why in thunder hev he done this, and why did n't he put his money in a bank, where 't will breed for him? The silly old coon 's losing Lordy knows how much by it. Even a sailor-man can

tell him, though 't is little enough that we ever get to put by and increase."

"He 's afraid," explained Charity. "He 's afraid of these here highwaymen, Blackadder and Workman. And some say there 's three, and some say there 's four. Everybody 's in a terror. And so be I, I 'm sure. Fancy being a highwayman's sweetheart! But sweethearts they 've got, 't is thought, and on Dartymoor too! Else they would n't larn such a lot about the people and their ways and customs. I 'm sure I shiver when the terrors be named, though I can't help feeling they must be awful brave and fine. They never use a woman uncivil or anything like that — so Miss Miranda says, for they stopped her and his reverence, her uncle, and took the little they carried, and was terrible polite. And father 's held to be pretty 'snug,' you see, though little do the people dream what a 'mazing rich man he is; and I 'm sure I did n't till now; and I 'm very certain mother have n't an idea of it. She 'd very likely faint with wonder if she heard tell about this. And, of course, father thinks these bold chaps have got wind somehow about his money and will come swooping down here, like a pair of jackdaws, to see what they can snatch. So he 's bethought him of the barn and packed his treasures here, out of harm's way. How little he knowed what eyes was on him! But what a terrible upstore there would have been if he 'd chanced to find you!"

Benjamin laughed softly.

"'T is a great temptation to a poor boy to be chained up in reach of a fortune, my pretty!" She kissed him.

"I wish everybody's money was as safe as father's," she answered. "But this be a very good thing to have happened, come to think on 't, and I 'm very glad it fell

out so. 'T will larn father one thing very clear; 't will teach him presently, when he comes to know about you and your hiding-place, that whatever else a 'Merican man may be, there 's none so honest under the sun."

"All very well," he said; "but that won't do for him. Ain't I lootin' a tarnation sight more than his snuff-boxes and scarf-pins and his cash? Hev n't I been and gone and stole his own and his only priceless, blessed gal away from him?"

"You stole naught," she answered. "'T was given free — free as the sunlight — with a great ocean of love thrown in!"

He put his arms round her.

"What a maid! Was ever the like!" he cried softly.

Anon she gave him a letter from Seapach and told him the news at the War Prison; then bade him 'good-night' and stole away. His news had amazed her, and she was longing to tell it to her mother. She was half in a mind to feign illness and call Mrs. Caunter to her from Jacko's side. But she thought better of that and decided to keep her wonderful secret until the morning came.

CHAPTER XX

MR. BLACKADDER'S AM· .ION LEADS HIM TO SEEK A NEW COUNTRY AND STAND FOR LAW AND ORDER

THE misguided son and heir of General Sir Archer Godolphin had long realized the significance of his folly. With the arrogance of youth, fired by lofty ideals, and willing to believe that his new friends might presently be brought to see with his eyes, he had joined the highwaymen and proved himself well able to live their life. Much of it indeed appealed to him, and for a time he exalted them into honest rebels against a world gone wrong. He looked upon them as he looked upon the American prisoners, and believed that they fought their craven country on principle, and in some measure as a protest against the cruelty and injustice of the times. Blackadder, who was of a reflective turn, rather tended to establish this belief. He always listened patiently to Felix, and often amended his aspirations; but Workman, to do him justice, never pretended anything. He invariably laughed at young Godolphin's windy opinions and more than once, behind the back of Felix, had some sharp words with his companion on the subject.

"You 'll fright the boy away," declared Shadrach Blackadder; "and I 'd be sorry for that. He may be useful yet. If we can screw him up to the pinch, we 'll get him to tell us where his rich old aunt, Dame Parlby,

lives at Okehampton, and 't is a pity that we should part before we know that and all about her."

"I shan't fright him away," answered Workman. "But his old aunt won't get into our clutches through him. He says that she does good with her money and hates the government, and is one of the right sort. If he leaves us, 't is to her that he 'd bolt; but he won't leave us."

"He 's terrible angry with somebody about something. He heard from Kek that a young farmer was dead, and he used to know the man and shoot with him. There 's always a chance to make him useful when he rages against the world."

"Since that little matter at Great Sherberton he 's been mighty shy, however. He seems to think that stopping a coach on the highway is in the game, but don't like our calling here and there when the master 's out."

"That 's just the man," said Blackadder. "He 's full o' whimsies, and breaking into a house troubles him, but breaking into a coach don't. However, we can't take no account of these little oddities. For my part I think he talks a mighty deal of good sense, only 't is n't the sort of sense that 's any use to us. I shall put it to him presently that we are going back to Salisbury Plain, and ask him if he means to come along or intends to say farewell."

"He 'll come," declared Workman. "He can't stand alone. We must fool him a bit longer and tell him that we are going to give up the business pretty soon and use the stuff we 've collected to advance the welfare of the world. He 's always only too glad to believe anything pious about us."

That night, while Mother Brimblecombe prepared

supper, the three men spoke together, and Felix refused to go to Salisbury Plain.

"My plans are made up," he said. "I can't stop in this country any longer now, for they 'd hang me in a trice if they caught me; but the peace will be proclaimed very soon and I mean, if possible, to get drafted in among the gangs of the war prisoners when they are quitting this country for their own. There are many Englishmen among them — men who were tempted by the cash offered to throw in their lot with America and fight on the privateers and war-ships. I can pose as such a man and get to America and seek to do some valuable work there. There are those in the prisons would help me, and I can start again. I 'm done for here. I don't blame anybody but my foolish self — how should I?"

"We told you to look all round it before you joined us," said Workman; "and we never pretended to be angels in disguise either. Shad may have a bee in his bonnet sometimes; but I never have. I never wanted to set the world right; I only wanted the world to set me right and, taking one thing with another, it has very nearly done so. A little more fun and I shall go home to my wife and start a pub nigh Limehouse Docks, where I was born, and join the ruling classes."

Blackadder was considering.

"Your thought, to cut this and get to America, is a very good thought," he said to Felix. "For my part I can't see why such a course would n't suit me as well as you. It might be possible to get in along with the prisoners and sail in a cartel ship; but since I 'm a man of substance now, it would be better to get to London presently and sail off like a gentleman. And you — if it comes to the ears of your people that you mean to make a new

start in a foreign land — no doubt they 'll very gladly help you to do so — and pay you to stop there."

They pursued this theme for a considerable time and Felix, always prone to extremes, felt his heart grow something lighter at the possibility of retrieving the past and beginning again with chastened spirit and increased sense. To his family, however, he refused, of course, to apply.

"I am cast out and cannot creep by night to Prince Hall and cringe for the rights denied me by my father," he said. "I have now no family; I have no friends, unless you men and Mother Brimblecombe are my friends. There was a farmer I counted a friend until a fortnight since; but he is dead — lured to his death, it would seem, by a cursed girl."

"'T was that you were in such a mighty rage about a while ago," said Workman.

"Well might an honest man rage. I know none of the particulars. I only hear that Richard Bolt, of Dart Hollow, has been shot by the soldiers, and that a woman was at the bottom of it — the woman he loved. She was playing him false with one of the sailors at the War Prison; then Bolt hit back and collared the rascal, when he escaped; and the next thing is that he is shot by the soldiers. That treacherous devil of a girl was at the bottom of it, no doubt."

"You always hate the girls," said Workman. "For my part the Devonshire girls suit me something wonderful. There 's a little blue-eyed party that lives not ten miles from this identical farm — eh, Mother Brimblecombe?"

The old woman was serving supper.

"Yes — I know. She 's all right. She 'd let 'em skin

her alive afore she 'd harm a hair of your sandy head."

"Mark me!" said Will Workman, "when I get my public house and become a respectable old sport down Limehouse way, that girl shall be one of my wives! I 've said it, and what I say I hold to."

"I 'm sorry for t' others then," answered the old woman. "Nancy B—— won't brook any rivals. She's not built like that."

But Workman only laughed.

"'T is wonderful what a knack I have of making the females see a thing from my own point of view," he answered. "And my point of view has always been that a man wants three wives at the least — and another for holidays. And I 'm sure a clever creature like Nancy will soon feel I 'm right."

Blackadder looked at his friend mournfully.

"To think you can talk that drivel after the years you 've been along with me! But I 've often said the women will be the death of you, William. They 'll hang you among 'em, as sure as I 'm sitting in this chair. You 'd better far do what I am going to do, if all goes well, and come to the Land of the Free along with Godolphin and me. Not that any land can be a free land for a fool that wants three wives!"

Will turned to Felix.

"And who might be this tartar in petticoats that got her lover shot for her when she was tired of him? She sounds a crafty piece and might be useful to the right sort of man."

"She 's a woman called Charity Caunter — a farmer's daughter."

"Jacko Caunter 's her father," said Mother Brimblecombe. "'T is a wonder you boys have n't had a smell

at Bair Down, for Jacko 's said to be a terrible snug chap. And he trusts none and keeps all his cash in a stocking up the chimney. So the tale goes."

"He is rich without a doubt," declared Felix. "A mean old devil — fit father for that infernal girl. I 'd like to make them smart."

"Nay, nay," replied Blackadder. "The game 's up. I 'm going to do no more. Back to Salisbury Plain and my old quarters. But now you 've fired me to try Ameriky and let my doings be forgot in this country, I 's very full of the notion."

"If this man is really rich, and keeps his money by him, 't would be to flout Providence to take no note of it," said Workman. "And more than that: we 've got Felix here o' our side for once, for he wants to strike a blow for his murdered friend. 'T is little likely that the starveling fool has scraped much, but a hundred or two added to what we 've saved by the sweat of our — horses, would help against the rainy day and buy my beer barrels, and pay your passage. Tell us how it goes with this Master Caunter of Bair Down."

"That can I," said the old woman. "And I bear him a grudge, too, for he hit my husband when he was down and made him a bankrupt — long years ago now. And he came to me for a love philtre for his girl and would n't pay for it. And don't you think his nest is not worth robbing. He 's rich indeed. When Kek went to the War Prisons he heard about him."

"Kek shall go that way again, and pick up what crumbs of knowledge he may," said Workman. "There 's the *Ring o' Bells* inn — a snug spot we 've passed once or twice in the small hours. Let Kek go there to offer poultry or pigs for sale and learn what he can."

But Blackadder was doubtful.

"'T is rather too near the soldiers for my liking," he said. "How should we come and go?"

"For that there 's no better place on the Moor," answered Felix. "And I 'll guide you there willingly enough. We should keep on the high ground, ride down from Devil's Tor, over the Bair Down Tors, drop upon the old rat like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky, and away by the road we came. The farm stands uplifted far from everywhere."

Blackadder relented at the possibility of riches.

"I 'll take no risks, however," he said. "'T would be a fool's trick to do so now, for all 's gone well with us and we 've no right to tempt Providence. 'T is ever the way with gentlemen in our business; they grow greedy and will not let well alone. We will learn what Kek can gather, and then decide whether to take it or leave it."

They spoke of America, and Blackadder appeared to be much enamoured of the idea. He adopted a kindly manner to Godolphin, offered to be his second father if he so desired, and built lofty castles in the air concerning the United States and a respectable life there.

"One would fall in with their laws readily enough, no doubt," he said. "For 't is a man's country, and such as you and I would be made welcome in it. We might rise. I am too old, doubtless, to go very high; but a fiery lad like you, with a noodle packed with good stuff — why, 't is no knowing what they might make of you!"

"A precious pair!" laughed Workman. "You can't leave the Old World better than you found it, though you 'll leave it poorer; and then, once you land over the water, you 'll roll your eyes and sing psalms and leave tracts on the gate posts — to convert the grizzly bears.

Don't ask me to come. I like my Limehouse hostelry a deal better. And Kek here is of my way of thinking, for he 's going to be pot boy if his mother will let him."

It might have been noticed that intercourse with the highwaymen had left a mark on Felix Godolphin. He still burnt with high resolves and worthy ambitions, but it was inevitable that a youth of imagination and a highly impressionable temperament could not dwell with men of their character and take no colour from them. Their breadth of outlook, their standards of conduct, their Dionysian joy in life, and indifference to danger, combined to influence him unconsciously. There were times indeed when he glimpsed the fatal truth and relapsed into periods of profound melancholy, but the zest of the work, the triumph of power, the spice of peril, and the element of romance, told their tale. Not seldom he forgot the mean and sordid side, the knowledge that he was a hunted outlaw, the grim fact that every man's hand was against him, and that every day increased the likelihood of capture and destruction. Such a life was a far cry from his ideals, and yet he had suffered it. But now that the end was in sight he felt beyond measure thankful, and already thirsted to begin a worthier existence in the New World, since by his own act he had destroyed all possibility of justifying himself in his own country.

He condoned the performances of Blackadder and Workman, and could hardly remember a robbery that might be condemned on his own faulty ethics; but that was because the highwaymen knew his standards of right and wrong and were not concerned to detail all their proceedings. To-night, however, in a jovial mood, Blackadder let Felix into a secret, and staggered the youth with an account of his father's treatment upon Cocks Tor.

Workman roared with laughter as his friend, in the dry manner peculiar to him, told the story, while Sir Archer's son, round-eyed and panting, listened to particulars of the outrage.

"By the same token," concluded Blackadder, "I 've kept his watch and seals and ring in the strong box for you. There 's little left there now, for we 've got rid of everything — at ruinous loss of course; but the turnip 's an heirloom, and since your old warrior is going to cut you off with a shilling, you 'd better keep that, and his trinkets, too. A fine old chap, and quick as lightning still — every inch a soldier. He 'd have bored a hole in Workman if it had n't been for me — not the first time I 've saved William's worthless life neither."

Then Felix broke out into a passion of wrath, and cursed both men for cowards.

"You could do that! You could maul an old, one-legged man and put him to the torture and ride away, leaving him where he might be dead by morning! You dastardly wretches! You mean dogs! And I have thrown in my lot with ——"

Blackadder crashed his hand on the table so loudly that the crockery jumped.

"Stow all that!" he said. "Who asked you to join us? Who wanted you to join us? If you throw in your lot with the devil's right hand ——"

Then Workman in his turn interrupted.

"List till the tale is told, and don't be such a silly prig, boy. The gallows stands but a few yards from the high-road, and we know that your father and his man had but a short vigil. Before dawn they were set free. 'T was Trueman Trinny and Jacko Caunter — the gentleman we are to visit presently — who found the old blade and his

scab of a man. I know all about it from my girl; and bear this in mind, had not your father put a shower of hard words upon us, and forgot that he was dealing with gentlemen, no harm had befallen him. 'T was his fault for bearing himself so harshly!"

"Odds me!" said Blackadder, calming down. "Need we tell you how your father can talk when he is angered? You have had the lash of his tongue yourself, and did you suffer it? Then why suppose that Workman and Shadrach Blackadder, with royal blood in his veins, were to listen humbly, hat in hand, while this man wished and hoped to see them hanged? Be reasonable. We hurt him not, but only left him to cool his gizzard awhile and reflect on the changes and chances of life and the folly of losing the temper with strangers who do not lose theirs."

Felix said little more, and Blackadder, rising, descended to a small stone cellar under Metherill farmhouse. There an oak box lay hidden beneath a pile of brushwood; and he unlocked it and brought young Godolphin his father's signet, watch, and seals.

At the same moment the man Kek entered, and called for his supper.

It was Godolphin's turn to go on guard, and now, donning a heavy coat, he departed, without more words, and took up his position under the stars. They glittered frostily, but the night was not so cold as his heart. Curtains seemed to open upon the past, and while he paced solitary on sentry-go before the outer gate of the farm, and stopped at each end of his journey to listen, he seemed to see his young life unfold before him, with its childish joys and sorrows, its hopes and fears. He remembered well the days when his father was proud of

him, and foretold for him a soldier's life; but soon, when the time came, his inclination and bent had turned from the profession of his family. From that moment opened the rift between the General and himself — a rift yearly widened by their extreme diversity of instinct — until the fatal, final quarrel which had cast Felix from his home.

He entered upon dark moments of anguish now, and even felt a hunger for reconciliation and forgiveness. But the time was past; his madness cried out to be paid for; the only hope that remained was escape from the scenes that had witnessed his disgrace.

In the dark hour before dawn it seemed that a spirit walked beside the lad, and showed him what he was. He stood still, looked at the sinking moon, and felt a strange premonition that the future held worse terrors, worse agonies for him than any he had yet known. He was no coward, but the death he had earned looked dreadful in that hour. His pride of race, long smothered, woke again, and the thought that it was his father's son who had smirched a noble name, pierced his heart like a knife.

He fought down the dread dream, and turned his mind resolutely to the future, when he should escape the land that he had outraged, and begin in humility to lead worthier days in the mighty country beyond the sea.

It was still dark when Workman relieved the watcher. They exchanged a few words, and Felix went into the farmhouse and soon slept.

A week later Kek carried out his mission and, under pretence of selling a pair of ducks, spent an hour in the bar of the *Ring o' Bells* and gleaned the information his masters desired.

"There was talk of the country-side," said he, on returning home, "of the country-side and the ways of the people. Naught could have falled out better, and while I sat — sucking my pipe and drinking a drop of beer — the folk chattered of the War Prison and of the way you men robbed Great Sherberton and of the preparations made for to catch you round about. Then, who should come in for a whet but Jacko Caunter himself — a thin, sharp-eyed man with a beak like a kite. He 's ready and willing, I warn 'e! Bragged for half an hour of how he 'd treat ye. Naught but a pack o' fools would fall to 'e; but let 'e call at Bair Down, and he 'd show 'e a thing or two beyond all your cleverness to cope with! He'll have ropes round your necks double-quick, and teach you how one clever farmer be equal to a dozen such varmints as you and Workman."

"Now that 's a man!" chuckled Blackadder. "We must n't miss him. We must n't call when he 's from home."

"You won't," answered Kek. "You won't do that — for why? He never is out. He bides home all the time, and sends his men and women out. He ban't going to leave Bair Down for a moment till you two blades be catched and hanged. He 's ready for 'e, and terrible anxious to earn the reward."

"I like the sound of him," declared Shadrach. "'T will be a cheerful 'good-bye' to Dartmoor."

"And he says that if you can come by his money you 're welcome to it. He 'd took a drop afore I left, and osler Jan French was pumping him, and Jacko said that if anybody was to say that he 'd gotten four figures he would n't call him a liar."

"'T will be a cheerful 'good-bye' to Dartmoor,"

repeated Blackadder. "And good-bye to you, Mother Brimblecombe, I 'm fearing; but if Kek here goes along with William to London, I think you 'd better come to America with me. I 'm sure they 'd be very well pleased to see you there, my old lady."

"Don't count your chickens afore they be hatched, Shadrach," retorted the woman. 'T is time enough to invite me to Ameriky when you find if you can get there yourself."

"Have no fear," he answered. "Young Godolphin here, and your humble servant, are weary of this manner of life. We shall be chapel members there; and I 'll lead the hymn, and he 'll carry round the bag. We 've settled it all very clever; and if William was n't such an unregenerate dog he 'd come with us and turn over a new leaf too; but we know him: he 's past praying or praying for."

CHAPTER XXI

IN WHICH A PITCHER GOES ONCE TOO OFTEN TO THE WELL

THE sloop of war, *Favourite*, had sailed to the United States with the Ghent Treaty of Peace, and the War Prison was full of hopeful and happy men who believed that home and liberty at last had come in sight. There fell a market-day when a prevenient spirit of freedom was in the air, and the sailors appeared to be infected by it. Only thought of the dead and dying, who would never see home, saddened their companions.

Little guessing what awaited them, Charity Caunter and her mother returned to Bair Down one evening with empty baskets as usual, and wondered how many more markets they might attend. Matters had advanced a little at home, and it was determined on the day when peace should be declared, that Mr. Gun was to emerge from his hiding-place and boldly approach the master. That much good could come of it none thought; but there was Charity to be reckoned with, and she, of course, had decided to throw in her lot with her lover, come what might.

"If father won't understand, and see the wonnerful sort of man you are, and welcome you, as he ought," she said, "then I 'll leave him for evermore, and go back along to Vermont with you and do the best I can to be a joy and treasure to you, Benjamin. Your good 's my good, and your bad 's my bad for ever and ever; and if my father can't understand a simple, natural thing like

that, so much the worse for him. He dare n't stand out, once you 're free; but I feel no fear, like mother does, for I know what you are, and you 'll drive sense into him sooner or late, even if mother and me have to hold him down while you do it!"

But the lovers' plans miscarried very completely in this respect, and Mr. Caunter was destined to see and hear Benjamin Gun a good deal sooner than the mate of the privateer *Vermont* either expected or intended. Other interviews also awaited Jacko, and a thing he had most urgently and incessantly longed to happen actually did so. His ambition in a certain quarter was amply gratified; and he lived, like many another wiser man than himself, to find anticipation pleasanter than reality.

Some hours after his woman-kind had gone to Prince Town, on the day in question, Jacko was among his pigsties setting a rat-trap when, looking up, he observed two mounted men and three horses at a gate not fifty yards from him. Instantly the thought of the highwaymen flashed into his mind. He shook, and turned to fly into his house and make fast the door against them before they should reach him. The visitors, however, allowed for any such intention, and as Jacko prepared to depart unseen he found himself already confronted by a tall, iron-grey man who wore black clothes, top boots, and a black three-cornered hat. The stranger allowed himself one extravagance of dress, however, for his waistcoat was of yellow silk, and presented a very gorgeous appearance. He carried a brace of pistols, and wore a mask that proclaimed him even before he proclaimed himself.

Shadrach Blackadder bowed, and wasted no time.

"At last, Farmer Caunter! Everything comes to him who waits, according to the good old saying. We 've

known these many days that you hungered for our company, and we 're the last men on earth — Workman and I — to overlook a compliment like that. But we 've been busy, and doubtless you 've been occupied too; so we put off our treat till we could find a time when you were all alone and had a little leisure. We knew you were at home, and that your women were over the hill, and your man gone to Tavistock. And I 'm Shadrach Blackadder, esquire, and yonder stands William Workman, with a friend, whose modesty makes him nameless. And I hope I fill your eye, farmer — I hope I please you, for I 'm anxious to find you in the best of tempers!"

His great hard mouth grinned, and his eyes flashed through his mask. He towered half a foot taller than the other, and could have picked him up and cracked him like a filbert. This, indeed, Jacko Caunter perceived. He looked about him, realized the hopelessness of his position, and chuckled inwardly to know that his wealth was safely hidden.

"Yes," he said, "I 've long wished to set eyes on you — I own it. I 've a sneaking admiration for your sort. But enough be so good as a feast. Having seen you, I 'll thank you to be gone. There 's naught for you here."

"Think better of it, Jacko," said Mr. Blackadder with easy familiarity. "You won't send me and my friends away empty handed after our long ride. We 're hungry and thirsty both, and the times are hard, and 't is all a man of fine feeling can do to keep a decent coat on his back and a good horse between his legs. You understand? I don't want to be rude nor forcible; but I 'm sure you 'll mark the pleasure of this call in a practical sort of way. We heard — God forgive the liar who brought the news — that you were going to hang, draw,

and quarter us at sight, and that our lives and our liberties would n't be worth a day's purchase once you got your claws on us And William, yonder, was terribly frightened, for he 's a man of peace and hates to treat anybody harsh, or be unkind to man or mouse. So I cheered him up and said 't was nonsense, and that you were one of the large-hearted sort, who only wanted to see us for our good and not your glory."

"You can eat and drink, if you must. I 'm very poor — there 's nothing in my house will pay you for the taking."

"I 'm sorry you 're poor. But after all 't is the state best suited to the Lord's chosen. And you 'll be poorer still ten minutes from now. It 's got to be, so don't make no faces about it. You are richer than we, at any rate, and 't is the duty of the rich to help the poor, so lead the way to your money bags, my fine chap, and I 'll follow."

Caunter set his teeth, and breathed hard. He was absolutely alone. Not so much as a sheep-dog remained on the farm, for both had gone with his hind, to drive a dozen bullocks into Tavistock. He thought of his loaded gun, and started at a run for the house; but Blackadder stopped him, and his voice was not too loud to drown the click of a pistol trigger.

"Wait for me, master, I pray you. Alas! I 'm not so spry as you, though a good many years younger. But I 'm much aged, owing to my hard life in the saddle. I 'll go in front, since you 're so eager to do the honours."

Shadrach went before Mr. Caunter and entered Bair Down kitchen; then Jacko hastened round the table that stood in the midst of the room and lifted his arm to a

gun that hung over the mantelshelf. But the other's pistol covered him instantly.

"Like your generous heart to offer that; indeed, 't would be of no service to me. A fowling-piece is only for you rich, idle birds who can go sporting. I have not time for such luxuries. Stand you there, and don't waste minutes. Is your cash in yonder desk?"

Caunter reflected. Hounds met not three miles from Bair Down. Good chance might bring them over the hill at any moment. In some mysterious manner the highwayman appeared to divine his thoughts. He had caught the tension on Jacko's face.

"I see you are listening for the music, but you hold us too cheap. Be sure we had not called this morning until learning which way reynard broke cover and took the hunt. We sighted 'em an hour afore — a merry burst away to Tavy. They 'll not come nigh Bair Down, farmer."

"What must be, must," said Jacko slowly, still reflecting if any chance offered to capture the man before him. As yet he felt no fear for himself or his money before Blackadder's banter.

"Have a drink, and tell me how I can serve you in my small way," he said.

Then his visitor came to business.

"Delays are dangerous, farmer, and I 'm not drinking. Come! You force me to be harsh. Your money or your life!"

The familiar challenge, heard so often by other terrified ears, now fell on Jacko Caunter's. And he very quickly perceived that the robber meant them. Blackadder's manner had changed. The fun was gone from his eyes and mouth. His great hand lifted his pistol and

covered the farmer. It was a hand long since red with blood. But the master of Bair Down still made no effort to obey.

"If I refuse?" he said.

"If you refuse, you 'll do so but once, and have no time to change your mind afterwards. You 're out of luck to-day. Come, fork out, or, God 's my judge, I 'll pistol you where you stand! It matters nothing to me one more or less. My life 's forfeit a score of times and think not that I fear to do what I threaten. The dead could tell you differently. You are no more to me than is the rat you set your trap for, to you."

"How much do you want?"

"All — money — plenty of it — tons of it. You 've bragged that you are worth four figures. We know all about it — and you. We don't waste our time or drop in on empty larders. We know your way, and that you trust nobody — wise man that you are — and keep your money under your own lock and key. A capital rule, a capital rule, farmer. But every rule has its exceptions."

"I swear on my solemn word of honour that I have n't got a sovereign in the house."

The other snorted with impatience, and pointed to a grandfather's clock that ticked in the corner of the kitchen.

"I must be gone over Bair Down to Devil's Tor in five minutes, and if I go empty handed you know what I leave behind me. As sure as the sun is shining above us, your light will be out if you put me off again."

He moved his pistol hand.

"What 's my life to me if you take my money?"

"Curse your life, and you and all that is yours!" thundered the other. "Shut your mouth, or I 'll shut it

for you. Speak one more word — one more — and your fool's brains will be spattering the wall. You forget your company! Run to your money and hand over. In four minutes I am gone."

Caunter saw that he must choose indeed between his possessions and his life. But since his wealth was hidden where, as he supposed, none else in the world but himself knew, to die was to leave his wife and child in sorry case. Death in any event had little charm; but he raged against his enemy very bitterly at heart and now, as he looked at him, if old eyes full of hate could have killed, Blackadder would have lived no more. Then Caunter led the way to his barn, conscious the while of a pistol-barrel behind him not a yard from the nape of his neck.

The highwayman, in better humour, but alert for any trickery, followed at the farmer's heels, ascended into the loft with him, and guessed that his threats had answered their purpose. As for Caunter, he climbed the ladder, went to his treasure-house, drew aside the litter above his hoards and began to bring out, one by one, his minor treasures.

But the other quickly stopped him.

"We 've enough of that sort of trash to keep shop already," he said. "Your money — your money."

"I swear to God ——" began Caunter; but the other struck him heavily on the mouth with the butt of his pistol.

"Remember!" he said. "I don't want to hear your dog's voice again. Fork out!"

"Take it then, and may the gallows groan with you afore 't is spent!" cried the elder in a passion of rage, with blood dripping from his lips.

"Spoken like a man! Now we shall be better friends.

Stand aside — get into yonder corner and let me see what lies here."

He knelt down, and began to heave up the money bags. Then Jacko changed his tone, wiped the blood off his jaws, and began to whimper.

"Be sporting," he said. "You 've always been called a brave chap that would n't hit the weak. Leave an old man a little of what it 's took him all his life to make."

"Ha! Ha!" laughed the other grimly. "How you sheep of the flock bleat and go on your marrowbones when you meet the wolf! But you 'd be the first to put the halter round my neck if others were here to help you. Nay, my friend, I 'll have it all — every stiver. You 're not too old to make another pile. To trash like you the pleasure of money lies in earning it. 'T is wise men, like me, who know best how to spend. I 'll ease you of your trouble — for that 's all money can be to you — and then you may set about making some more with a light heart."

He was not idle as he spoke, for he began to cram the deep pockets of his coat with money bags.

"Keep the silver spoons," he said. "Give 'em to your wife as a present from Shadrach Blackadder."

Then there happened a strange thing, for a great truss of hay leapt suddenly from its place and knocked Mr. Caunter heels over head, while from behind it, like a cannon-ball, there burst a man. With a spring he was at the highwayman's throat, and Blackadder's answering shot, taken hastily, missed Benjamin Gun's head and only scratched his shoulder. The sailor knew himself hit, but could not tell how hard, and used his great strength while it lasted. The other, heavily weighted, and off his guard, had no time to parry this terrific attack, for Ben fought like a tiger. He felled his opponent with a good

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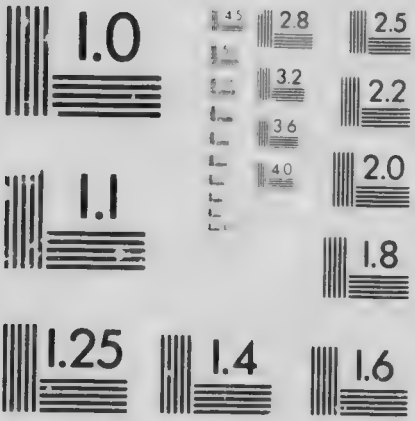

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'half Nelson' and had meant then to fall on top of him and strangle him if he refused to yield; but it chanced that the throw was more than enough for this purpose. Accident willed that Blackadder dropped backwards through the trap-door where the ladder ascended into the loft. He vanished, and Gun, sailor-fashion, was down after him in a moment. But he found no need for haste. The other had dropped upon the back of his head and broken his neck. He stared up now with open, sightless eyes, and his body still quivered. But he was dead.

Mr. Caunter screamed from up aloft.

"The money — the money — quick! There 's two more outside, and they 'll be running, now they 've heard the pistol! Hand it up — drag it out of his pockets! Then come up yourself and we 'll make the trap fast!"

Gun obeyed, since he was wounded, and found the farmer unprepared to show fight against the other highwaymen. He dragged the little bags of gold from Blackadder's pockets and threw them up to Jacko. Then, as the last was recovered, and quick feet sounded without, Gun clambered up the ladder again, and the farmer lowered the trap and made it fast.

But it seemed that Blackadder's friends were soon convinced of his death. There came the sound of smothered oaths from below; then a man climbed the ladder and tried to push up the trap-door. But he failed, and soon descended again.

Jacko, forgetting his preserver, listened with his ear to a crack in the floor.

"They be off!" he said, a moment later. "They see he 's dead as a beetle and can't be deader. I wish to God I had my gun — even now I may get a shot at 'em from behind the pig-sties. Come!"

He lifted the trap, slipped down to the ground, and peeped round the barn door to see two men hastily returning to their horses. It was possible, by entering the farm from the back, to gain upon them unknown, and this Jacko did. He had long thirsted to fire his gun at a highwayman, if it could be done in safety, and now it seemed that the opportunity offered.

"Keep close to me!" he said. "Don't you go away, for you 'll have to fight again if they turn back on me."

Then he hitched down his gun, ran out, and hurried with bent back along a low wall. At the end of it he stood within forty yards of Workman and Felix Godolphin; then, lifting himself, he raised the weapon to his shoulders, and took aim at the younger man. Both had just started to ride away, and they were crossing Jacko at right angles. The gun roared out, and its double charge nearly knocked Mr. Caunter down; but Benjamin shouted to him to get up and run forward.

"He's dropped! You 've hit him!" he cried. Then they rushed forward, only to discover that a horse and not a man was struck, for the fallen rider leapt up in a moment, though his steed could not rise. With amazing swiftness, Godolphin got clear of his fallen horse and leapt upon that of Blackadder, which his comrade led by the bridle-rein. Thus both escaped at a gallop, and Mr. Caunter, cursing his luck, and bestowing no thought on the wounded steed, returned to his barn.

"If the creature ban't dead, we 'll slay it presently. The hide and hoofs be worth something," he said. "They 've gived us the slip, the rogues. But you can bear me witness that I ran upon 'em, man to man, and did my best to shoot 'em. And one 's a deader anyhow."

"Yes, neighbour. Brave as a lion you was — I never saw the like. Rest sure I shall tell the people what a wonderful man you are — when I get the chance to do it."

"Blackadder 't is, for he told me so — the hero of the gang — the best-known highway robber in history since Turpin and King!"

They returned to the dead, and Gun knelt down and examined him. His mask had fallen off; his head was bare. They saw a close-cropped grizzled skull going bald, a grim, heavy face under-hung like a bull-dog, yellow teeth, a blue muzzle innocent of the razor for some days, and a pair of steel-grey, unconquerable, predatory eyes, that already began to grow dim. The man's great height and powerful limbs were apparent, and one hand still held his empty pistol.

"A derned fine chap, but better dead than alive, Farmer Caunter," declared the American. "I hope you 're none the worse, but I 'm afraid you 'll have some aches and pains to-morrow. No matter — that 's better than a bullet in your liver, or all your money gone. Nary a dollar missing. Better you count 'em to make sure."

"Who are you? What are you? What was you doing hid up in my loft? Why! good angels! I 've never seen you afore in all my born days."

The old man was still shaking with excitement, and panting like a pair of bellows.

Gun laughed.

"I guess you 're full up with wonders," he said. "Life 's a funny thing at times, ain't it? And so 's death. Here am I — one of those same cussed Yankees, that give you the pip every time you think upon 'em, and my name 's Benjamin Gun, mate of the *Vermont* privateer — the

little gal that very near whipped two of your ships of the line. And having had enough, and more 'n enough of Prince Town War Prison, what do I do but hop out; and a good man, now gone to his rest, helped me. And 't was thanks to your jewel of a daughter that I came into your barn, master; and a blameless life I 've lived behind the hay and corn. For about twenty year I 've been hid there, it seems to me. Though I 'd hev stopped twenty year longer to lend you a hand with this fellow."

"Then you saw me plant my stuff up there?"

"That did I. And I counted it over, just to see what it came to, so as I should know how much you was worth if you were took sudden. Yes, I saw you put it there, and thinks I to myself, 'If anybody comes for my future father-in-law's money, he 'll find a hard nut to crack in me!' And so they did, for I 've had the good luck to break this poor hero's neck for him, and save your chink for you. That 's how it is. Quite a lot for you to think upon, Farmer Caunter. 'T is a day you 'll long remember: and so shall I."

The other looked from the dead to the living, and the living to the dead. He still panted, and put his hand to his brow.

"Take your time, and puzzle it out, old chap," continued the sailor. "I dare say 't is a tidy-sized nut to crack, but such a valiant man as you and so clever too — why, you 'll soon figure it clear in them deep brains of yours."

Mr. Caunter began to realize what had happened. But still he moved and talked as though he were in a dream.

"You 've done me a good turn seemingly!" he said at length.

"Waal! It do look as if you might put it that way."

"You be English — say you be English then. Surely to God none but an Englishman could have done it. One of they fellows that went on the American fighting ships for the sake of the pay?"

"Not a chance, master! American all through and through — born there — raised there. And there 's millions in Vermont braver and bigger and better 'n me!"

Whereupon the farmer thought of his thousand pounds and gave in.

"Shake, then, whatever the hell you are!" he said. "You went for an armed man, and a terrible one, with naught but your naked fists; and you bested him, and slew him; and, now I come to look at you, he 's hit you somewheres, for there 's blood all over you — you be bleeding like a pig from a hidden wound."

"'T is in my shoulder, but nothing to name, or else I should know it afore now. Your daughter will soon put that right. Naught matters to me if you 'll stand by me and be my friend. That 's all I want — and why not?"

There lay the challenge, and Jacko hesitated, while Gun spoke again.

"'T is three to one against you, farmer. And that 's too long odds, even for such a mighty man as you. Three to one, and two on 'em women. But I 'm not a bully — like this poor heap of rags and bones — God forgive him. I only ask you to listen to me patient and peaceful; and if I can't make you understand how I look at life, and what I 'm good for, and what I think of you — then I 'll throw up the sponge, and darken your doors no more."

"Come in the house," said Jacko Caunter, "and we 'll see how deep the ball have gone in your shoulder. As for you, us 'll find out if there 's any sense in you later.

But seeing as you 've let yourself be born a citizen of America, I can't hope much for your wits."

They went in together, and anon Caunter began to laugh grimly to himself.

"I be a good bit amused," he explained, "to think how my cunning brace of dratted females will stare, and what they 'll say when they trapse home along presently and find me and you hobnobbing over a drop of spirits!"

"They 'll only say what everybody else in these parts do know — that you are one of the largest-minded men in the country," declared Mr. Gun.

"'T is not more than a bit of a deep scratch, and the ball have cut its way through and not stopped in you," said the farmer presently, as he examined the wound. "Good luck for you — a bit lower and 't would have broke your collar bone or worse. 'T will dry up in a week if us puts a pinch o' tar to it. And now you 'd best to bide here for a bit while I get the cautcheries for your hurt; then I 'll climb up in my barn and make all safe. Us shan't get another visit from those blackguards again in a hurry. They did n't know the sort of man they had to deal with. To think that 't was I that was ordained to be the death of such a famous, perilous wonder! And fifty pound reward goes along with him!"

"'T will do very nicely for your gal's wedding, I reckon!" answered Benjamin Gun, and Mr. Caunter, without answer, departed to get dressings for the wounded shoulder. While he tended it presently he spoke again.

"See here, Master Benjamin Gun. It looks to me that the least said the soonest mended, where you 're concerned. There 's some men who 'd just go off to the War Prison and give you up to the soldiers right away.

They might think 't was their duty. But I 'm not like that. I see what you 've done, and I give you all credit for it; but what I want you to understand is that I can't let other people know how 't is. Because that would be to give you away. In fact, till peace be declared you 'll have to lie low so far as I can see. 'T is the only way of safety."

"Nothing will please me better," answered the sailor, "and now, as I 've made a friend of you, I don't care for naught else in the whole world."

"Then I must give it out that I killed Blackadder?"

"Certainly you must. And what 's more, I 've very little doubt that you would have killed him — if I had n't been there. You 've got pluck enough for ten old men — anybody can see that at a glance — and the way you tackled him was wonderful to hear. And I make no doubt that if I had n't come forward to lend a hand, you 'd have snooked round him presently and got the whip hand of him. 'T would take more than a common highwayman to best you!"

"Ah!" said Jacko, "you don't want for wits — I see that. A very understanding man, in fact. We 'll leave it so. You keep in hiding a bit longer, because you can't face the neighbours till you 're free, and I 'll explain this job by saying as I coaxed Blackadder up into my loft with cunning words, and then turned on him, like a tiger, single-handed, and threw him down the ladder and killed the dog!"

"And so you shall," said Mr. Gun, "and so you would have done, I warrant!"

"Now I be going to look at the dead rogue again, and see to the loft," answered Jacko. "'T will make the world cry with wonder to hear tell all about it!"

"So 't will then; and if you tell the tale oft enough, you 'll soon believe it!" answered the crafty sailor.

Half an hour later Mr. Caunter returned.

"More dreadful wonders in the land!" he said. "In fact, wonders never cease nowadays. I 've just been over to look at thicky dead hoss I shot — for dead it is. But the amazing matter be that 't is Felix Godolphin's hoss — the son of Sir Archer, as runned away a bit back along from Prince Hall, and was no more seen or heard! What do 'e think of that, sailor?"

"Is he the brother of Mistress Godolphin — her that knows your daughter so well?"

"The same."

"Then 't is a good thing he got free, for the lady be close friends with our Captain Burgoyne, and no doubt 't would hev been a trouble to 'em if you 'd shot the young man."

There was a sound without, and a woman's voice calling to Jacko.

"'T is the females back home!" he said.

"Now I 'll sit here, and us 'll be seen drinking together. 'T will make 'em think 't is the end of the world."

"Not that, farmer. Us don't want that yet. 'T is just the lion lying down with the lamb — the lion meaning you, of course!"

CHAPTER XXII

HOW MR. TRINNY STARTED TO HUNT FOXES AND AGAIN WAS DISAPPOINTED

MR. TRUEMAN TRINNY was nothing if not a philosopher. When, therefore, on the occasion of the sport which the dead highwayman had described to Mr. Caunter, the lively host of the *Ring o' Bells* found himself thrown out, he gave way to no impatience and did not so much as utter a lurid word. He blamed nobody but himself for the accident and, since it had been worse than foolish to quarrel with himself over so trifling a misfortune, Mr. Trinny kept his temper, satisfied his judgment that it was useless to do anything in particular, and walked his horse quietly in a direction where it was just possible the hunt might return. But no such thing happened, and the innkeeper presently rode homewards by way of the wild and lofty lands southwest of Fur Tor. To Devil's Tor he came, in course of time, and proposed to descend over the Bair Down hills, and so reach Two Bridges and his home. But that fell out to change his plans and afford some sport after all. Indeed, such sport he had never known and would never know again; for he found himself hunting without hounds or huntsmen; he experienced the sensation of hunting fellow-creatures, and he brought to the difficult task the skill, cunning, and pluck that belonged to him. Even so, it was good luck rather than good management that

launched him on his adventure, for he caught Will Workman napping; he won the first glimpse of the highwayman and his companion at a moment when both were cast into very violent concern and rode together, so deeply bent upon their own business that neither one nor other had eyes for the hills and hollows round about them. They were, in fact, walking their horses up the gorge of West Dart when Trueman Trinny first saw them, and in a moment he alighted from his own horse, that it might appear riderless, and himself sank behind a stone to escape their attention. He soon convinced himself that they had not seen him, and his own amazing long sight made him suspect their cut. Indeed, no local man or horse had mystified Trinny at half a mile in a clear noon such as the present, and though Workman and Godolphin rode a mile distant he felt no manner of doubt that he had surprised the famous highwaymen. Had Felix still ridden his own horse the watcher might have recognized it and him, but young Godolphin's steed was dead, and now he proceeded on Blackadder's.

Deep in conversation were the twain, and their future conduct formed the matter of their speech. Workman's rapacity contrasted with Godolphin's sentimental regret. The one man counted himself the richer by all his old companion's possessions; the other rode in a dream, still unable to realize that Shadrach Blackadder, an hour ago alive and his own grim self, was now dead, and that he would never see him or hear him again. Workman took the lead, and Felix yielded to his strength and swift decision. The elder decided that together they should leave the Moor on the following day. There was nothing to keep them, and the quicker they vanished the better.

"So far as you 're concerned, 't is all one," said William, "and belike you 'll get out of the country easier and take ship safer from London than from Dartmouth or Plymouth. As for me, with poor old Shad's share, I ought to sneeze at the gallows and settle down very snug and comfortable with my wife at Limehouse. There 's a friend here and there that I 'd like to have said 'good-bye' to, but they are of no account. I 've said 'good-bye' to Shad — that 's enough for one day. Dammy! I can't believe the old hawk have had his neck wrung. That chap at Bair Down was as good as his word, though who would have thought a man older than himself would ever best Blackadder! I 'd give something to know how it fell out. But 't will get in the papers presently."

"He shot my horse," said Godolphin, "and that means more than you 'll guess at first thought. Because my horse is well enough known at Bair Down, and when they find it dead every man on Dartmoor will understand where I am and what I 've been doing."

"Let 'em. 'T is all one now."

They planned their exodus and proceeded by gulley and stream bottoms well out of sight. Once the faint cry of hounds came to Godolphin's ear, but they were miles distant and did not appear. Meanwhile, like a Red Indian, Trueman Trinny tracked behind.

Before starting on this hunt he had taken sharp measures. First he doffed his pink coat, rolled it up, and left it under the overhanging ledge of a boulder, with his velvet cap. Next, dipping his hands to the elbows in a mire of peat, he anointed himself from head to foot, smeared his clothes, the tops of his boots, his white breeches, and even his face. He was now earth colour all over, and invisible on the face of the winter wilderness.

The highwaymen were walking their horses a mile ahead and Trinny, making a wide detour, and riding fast, reached a lofty point presently, that commanded their way for a considerable distance. To high ground above Fernworthy he came, dismounted, drew his horse out of sight behind a mass of rock, and flinging himself flat on a stone remained motionless. Thus he differed in no way from the granite, and might have been passed at fifty yards without much risk of discovery. But far away on the opposite hill his quarry went, and presently he moved again, descended to the valley, and entered the fringe of a little wood. He drew his horse among the trees, and himself climbed one at the edge of the copse. From this point he could trace the waters of Southern Teign, and mark a roof-tree or two sunk grey among small fields at the confines of the Moor. Now he sighted the horsemen again, saw them slowly ascend towards Metherill, and guessed at their goal. For the place and the people were known to him. He had seen Kek at the *Ring o' Bells* but a week before, and had felt some doubt at the time as to the reasons that had brought the countryman so far as Two Bridges with a pair of ducks. Trueman put two and two together, descended from his perch and, since he might no longer ride, went up the hill on foot, creeping from cover to cover, and gaining considerably on the horsemen. He waited only to see them enter Metherill gate and then, feeling the need for caution was ended, turned tail, ran for his steed, and rode back by the way he had come. Now Mr. Trinny's hunter found himself galloping in earnest, and never behind hounds had he been pushed as upon this occasion. For a plan was already matured in his master's mind. It sprang full-fledged, with every detail clear in Trueman's swift

imagination. But since his scheme demanded some elaborate preparations and co-operation of not less than a dozen stout and fearless spirits, all speed was necessary.

He meant to surround Metherill that night and take the highwaymen alive. Their holt was clear. They might actually be caught in it, while, if they proved to be absent, the capture would probably prove still more easy, for then Trinny and his forces could lie in wait and surround them when they returned. So the innkeeper argued, and as he galloped homewards, considered the men he could trust to help him in such a difficult venture. But here he speedily found a great difficulty face him, for such farmers as he might count upon were widely scattered. It would take twenty-four hours to beat them up, while the men actually on the spot, who were likely to render a good account of themselves, numbered but three.

Trueman Trinny considered the problem, and it did not make him slacken speed. He decided quickly enough what to do, and avoiding Two Bridges altogether, though he might have ridden past his own door and escaped recognition, he crossed Dart below his home and pushed on to Prince Town. A force of strong and seasoned men was vital to his purpose and, though reluctant to seek it off the Moor, the publican felt this no time for sentiment. He rode straight to the War Prison, therefore, and sent in his name to the Commandant.

Captain Short knew Mr. Trinny well, but failed to recognize the innkeeper under his disguise of mud and dirt. He was soon all attention, however; but Trueman's demand caused the soldier to hesitate.

"In a word," said Trinny, "I 've marked them down as surely as if I 'd walked into Metherill farmhouse with

them. That 's their den, and the fact that they are there explains a thing or two that has puzzled me of late. We can't strike too soon, and I 'm for action to-night. 'T is a job for armed men, and, if you can spare a dozen of your fellows, I 'll lead the way, and we shall do the trick before dawn of to-morrow. Not a soul knows about it but you, for I 've avoided Two Bridges of set purpose. The thing can be done in three hours, if we catch the rogues at home, and nobody need know what we 've been about till it 's all over."

After a few questions Short agreed, sent for Sergeant Bradridge, and issued his orders. Then Mr. Trinny enjoyed a square meal in the Commandant's quarters, procured a change of clothes, and was soon quite ready to take command.

An hour after dark a little company of twelve mounted men set out from the prisons, and since their destination was kept a secret till they were clear of Prince Town and unable to impart it, the soldiers talked among themselves and wondered much what this unusual errand might be.

When well upon their way Mr. Trinny enlightened them.

"We 're after that famous pair, Blackadder and Workman," he said. "I 've found their roost, and there 's a five-pound note apiece awaiting for you brave chaps if we nab 'em alive or dead."

He explained his plan to Bradridge as they trotted together at the head of the cavalcade.

"There 'll be no need for horses," he said, "so we can leave the lot half a mile from the farm and tell off a couple of your chaps to stand by 'em. Then I 'll go ahead and see how the land lies. They are pretty sure to set a watch, and if they do 't will be one of themselves, or the

chap called 'Kek,' Mother Brimblecombe's son. We 'll hope 't is him, for I can manage him without any help. But if one of the highwaymen 's on the lookout, then we must think of another way."

For an hour there was no sound heard but the clank and jingle of the mounted men. Then, led by the innkeeper, they reached the wood where he had climbed a tree. Here they dismounted, discarded all their trappings but a pistol apiece, and, leaving two of their number to guard the horses, proceeded on their way. The night was dark, and so still that Trinny began to feel alarm. He directed that the men should spread and proceed more slowly. Then, two hundred yards from the outer gate of Metherill, he stopped them, bade them come at a double if he called, but remain silent until he did so, or returned. They could now see the mass of the farm sunk in the blackness of night like some monster couching in the midst of the Moor. A solitary red light burnt unblinkingly in the kitchen window; but there was no other sign of life. Trinny now flung himself on his stomach and wriggled slowly, yard by yard, toward the gate. His progress was slow, and he spared no pains to make it sure. Not until he had reached within fifty yards of the entrance did he mark a glimmer like a glow-worm on a bank at hand. Then he heard sounds, and creeping still nearer, perceived the dim form of a man standing motionless beside the obscured lantern. He waited in doubt, to learn who the watcher might be, for the unknown silent shape was clearly on guard over the entrance to Metherill. It moved presently, and tramped heavily up and down. At each progression of the man Trinny drew himself a little nearer. He had now satisfied himself that he watched Kek, and presently the other

opened his lantern to light his pipe, and revealed his features. Kek it was, and when he had resumed his tramp the innkeeper retraced his way, crept slowly back a hundred yards, reached the rough cart-road that led to the farm, and then, rising from the ground, marched boldly along it.

He was challenged instantly.

"What man are you?" cried Kek from the darkness, and the visitor answered.

"Why Trueman Trinny, of course! Who but him would be wandering here at this hour of night? I've come from Chagford, and forgot my flint and steel. I want a light for my pipe. 'T is lucky you 're abroad, for I should have frighted your old mother into fits had I come knocking at your lonely door."

The peasant believed him and came forward.

"I was just shutting up the byres. There 's a light from my lantern."

He came forward, and Trinny greeted him in very friendly fashion.

"Don't forget that I 'm always ready for a pair of ducks, my son," he said, and then, as the unsuspecting Kek lifted his lantern, there fell on his rough head a blow that went near cracking his skull. At the same moment Trinny's other hand was clapped on his victim's mouth, so that no sound might break from it; but the precaution proved unnecessary. Kek, if not dead, had been rendered absolutely unconscious. He hung in a limp heap in Trinny's arms, and now the master of the *Ring o' Bells*, picking Mother Brimblecombe's son bodily up, carried him back to the waiting soldiers.

"So much for him," he said. "They are there, I doubt not, else the watch would n't have been set.

Gag him afore he comes to, and if he don't 't is no great odds, for if the rogue lives he 'll hang, as sure as his masters do. Now I 'll go forth again; and you come close and silent after, for we must rush 'em and get 'em alive if it can be done."

They bound the unfortunate Kek, left one man with him, and then advanced upon the house.

Bradridge and Trinny went first, each armed; then followed the soldiers. But the cautious approach was ruined by a clumsy red-coat, who fell in the dark, dropped on his hands, and discharged his pistol. Thereupon the stalk turned into a charge, and eight men rushed upon the door of the farm as it was thrown open from inside. Fate favoured the soldiers, for Godolphin, who leapt out first, was seized instantly by three of them, and as Workman, who came after, lifted his hand to fire, others closed round him. Both men were masked and armed, but only one bullet sped to scratch the nearest soldier, Seageant Bradridge.

"'T is over; 't is done! I 'm gone!" he bawled. "My life in red! — 't is all up with me!"

Then did Trinny leave the troop, for he cared not about the rest, and stopped only to see that the sergeant was not seriously hurt. He would not look upon the robbers, for in his big, sporting heart was a touch of sorrow that upon him had fallen the duty of closing their days. Death was their inevitable portion, and he knew it.

Now he went by the nearest way back to the horses, and presently sent them forward with their attendants. The highwaymen were bound hand and foot; their own horses were fetched from the stable for soldiers to ride, while they were seated on others. Kek, now restored to consciousness, sat before a soldier. Thus the whole

company, with the malefactors in the midst, went on their way to Prince Town. As for Trinny, he had already ridden forward with the news. He did not look on the faces of the conquered men, and little guessed that the son of General Sir Archer Godolphin was one of them.

He pushed forward, stopped at home for one moment to embrace his wife and tell of the night's doings and the capture of Blackadder and Workman, then, before she had time to correct him as to the facts, which she knew better than he did in some particulars, he galloped forward.

"He's mad," cried Mrs. Trinny. "His great mind has broken down at last! I knew it had to come. No head could carry such a brain as his and not fail sooner or later. He says that he's catched the valiant Blackadder, and that the soldiers are bringing him along; but didn't Jacko Caunter slay Blackadder with his own hands this morning? The Lord knows what Trinny's been doing, or who he's been catching. It looks to me as if the poor soul had turned highwayman himself, for he wasn't even wearing his own clothes!"

A tramp of horses and clatter of steel presently cut short Mrs. Trinny's doubts; then, as the soldiers passed, and the ostlers crowded round them and lifted lanterns to see their prisoners, more than one local man stared aghast at the familiar figure of Felix Godolphin, closely bound, and riding between the red-coats. Mrs. Trinny became hysterical when the news was brought to her.

"If Trueman's catched Sir Archer's son, and be like to bring trouble on Prince Hall, I'll divorce him, so sure as my name's Amelia Ann!" she said.

CHAPTER XXIII

ROBERT BURGOYNE IS CALLED TO SHOW WHAT HE IS MADE OF

IT cannot be denied that sterling virtue, like bread and butter, is apt to be insipid, and the good man, unless thrust upon trials and difficulties, or challenged with the harsh problems of the working-day world, ceases to have much more interest for humanity at large than a monk in a cave, or a monkey up a tree. Thus far Robert Burgoyne must be set in that category of the virtuous and dull; but now the time had come to prove him, if proof were needed. Not at the War Prison was the test to be made, but without, in a country strange to him; among people and amid institutions with which he had no acquaintance.

His call from the outer world came in the shape of a frenzied letter from the girl he loved, but even before its arrival Burgoyne was prepared for some such cry, because the events at Metherill were not hidden; the soldiers talked, and Mr. Trinny did not remain silent. Dartmoor breathed again to know that Blackadder was dead, sat upon, and buried in the new churchyard at Prince Town; while, as for Will Workman, he and his accomplices, Felix Godolphin and Kek Brimblecombe, soon lay together in Exeter gaol awaiting the Assizes and their certain doom.

Thus, like an armed man, had tragedy burst into the

house of Godolphin, and the cruel thunder-bolt falling upon Prince Hall kept Sir Archer invisible, bowed the head of the old clergyman, and lifted Miranda to action. The problem was to save her brother from a shameful death, and there appeared no possible solution, no conceivable way by which a solitary girl might achieve so great a purpose. The cup of Workman's iniquities was full, and Godolphin must be judged in like terms. There was no spirit of sympathy abroad for him, because public opinion declared that the young man's case admitted not any condonation. Workman was a ruffian who had enjoyed few advantages from his youth up; Blackadder had gone to his account; Godolphin, the son of a hero, born and nurtured in good principles — what could be said for him? He had disgraced his family; he had blotted a noble name, and brought his father's head with sorrow to the grave. Few, therefore, lifted a voice for Felix Godolphin; few expressed anything but satisfaction that his career of crime should thus be closed. Such a man was better dead; and it appeared just that he should perish as a malefactor, for so his tragical end might serve the purpose of a warning to his own generation. Not wholly friendless, however, was the unfortunate man. Trinny had found himself in dire concern after the event of the capture, for he understood something of the beliefs of the prisoner, and knew that he entertained honest opinions and was not fair game for the gallows. It came as an immense shock to Trueman to learn the result of his capture, and to find that Felix Godolphin, and not Blackadder, was his second prisoner. And if he did not blame himself, another did; for Amelia Ann, to whom the name of Godolphin stood next in esteem after her own, chose to

condemn her husband's achievement very heartily. She criticised him sharply, refused to see his argument, and declared that since he had used his heaven-inspired intellect to perform this wonderful feat — a feat she admitted beyond the power of any other mortal man — then it was clear he must work further wonders and bring Master Felix safely out of the dreadful position into which he had thrust him.

"'T was you put him into Exeter gaol, and 't is you have got to get him out again," said Trueman's wife. "I won't hear nothing about it; but I say that 's your duty, and I 've never known you to hang back when your duty called. You made a rash and reckless mistake to catch the man at all, for you ought to have took the other, and let the young man go free — knowing what the family is, and how they regard us; but since you made the mistake of getting him taken, along with that thief the poor gentleman was silly enough to neighbour with, then you must put it right, and I look to you to do so. And if you don't, you 've got to reckon with me."

She would hear no excuses, and refused to listen to the difficulties presented.

"I don't want to be bothered with anything of that," said Mrs. Trinny. "I 'm quite aware 't is a man's work to bring a chap out of gaol and safely off. If 't was a woman's work I 'd do it myself; but 't is not. Though well you know if it should fall out presently that I can be useful, then you 'll not need to ask me twice."

Mr. Trinny calmed her down as best he could, but was concerned to find how seriously she took the disaster. The agony and grief hanging like a night over Prince Hall only increased her indignation at the delay. Of course Trueman was in deep concern for the prisoner

also; but he felt powerless, and found himself unable to proceed without willing hands to aid him.

At this juncture, three days after the capture, Burgoyne received a letter from Miranda Godolphin. It came to the prison market in Charity Caunter's pocket, and it was a frantic appeal for help at this dark hour.

"My own love," she wrote, "you will have heard of our terrible grief. That such a thing was possible I guessed too well, for there were dim rumours that my brother had thrown in his lot with the highwaymen when he left his home, and knowing him, I felt it a very possible thing. I have already suffered much, when I looked forward to what might be the end. But the report was close hidden from my father and my uncle. You know them, and you can guess a little of what this awful event must mean to them. My father seems to have the woe of the world upon his shoulders. He has grown thin and old on a sudden. He drags about, and puts up his hand to keep me off and silence me when I run to comfort him. My uncle Septimus is not a man of the world; he spends his time on his knees, praying for Felix. But this is a case for more than prayer. If he is to be saved, there will be needed strong hands and fearless hearts to save him. There is no shadowy chance that he can win a pardon. The outcry against him is almost universal, and you shall hear no sympathetic voice, and see no sympathetic face. This was bound to be so, for only we, who knew him and understood his hopes and ambitions, can perceive that it was not the true Felix who did these things; only we can allow for this strange and terrible influence that overtook him to his ruin.

The thing to be done is to save him, that he may presently clear himself with all men; and I come to you — my light and my life — because right well I know that if it is within mortal power to save him you will bring it about. I hang on you, Robert, for there is none else that I may turn to; and if there were a thousand others I would choose you. You know that you have won my father's heart. Oh! how different he is from the days — so short a while ago — when he bade my poor brother go from before him and see him no more! Life has played cruel havoc with him — he has been brought under a cruel scourge. The house is desolate, and I hate my useless tears, and long to be doing something, risking something, justifying my existence and its glory! For I would not have you, who are bravery alive, wed a school miss, who never did a braver thing than hunt a fox or kill a salmon. Count upon me now; put some task upon me; suffer me to help you in this mighty business of saving my brother. I rate you as high as I love you, my dear hero of Vermont, and that is to say I believe with all my heart you will bring off Felix yet. If it can be done, you can do it. I will not hear you say you cannot.

"Thus it stands. Felix is shut up in Exeter gaol, and will take his trial a fortnight hence. The verdict and sentence are foregone; but he must not hear them. First you yourself must be free to come to us. I have said nothing as yet, but I am sure you can get parole; indeed, nothing but your sympathy with your compatriots prevented you long since from so doing. Captain Short has all power in such a matter, and I have already written to him upon that theme. Leave Prince Town for Prince Hall then as swiftly as may be, and

come to us. My father will be thankful to extend the hospitality of his house to you, for he often spoke of you before this tribulation emptied his mind of all else. Come to us, and tell me what we shall do, and how proceed in this vital matter. It will be like the first gleam of dawn on my darkness to know that you are free and thinking of us. I will waste your time no more with words, but pray you think upon the deeds we must do. There are others who will help if they can; but alas! they are few.

"Come quickly, quickly to your unhappy lover,

"MIRANDA."

Here then, was a challenge to the American, and if his knowledge of life and its difficulties made his face grow long before the letter, his youth, his unconquerable pluck, and his power over men, fired him to accept it. No incentive lacked. The enterprise was huge enough and difficult enough, the inspiration to it came from all that was most precious in his life. The ingenuous pathos and simplicity of Miranda's letter moved him, even as her courage rejoiced him. Her infinite trust in his strength; her belief in his power to save the situation, warmed his heart; but the thing to be done depended at least as much on intellect as muscle and pluck. He had preferred to play a lion in the matter, for his master instinct was that of a fighter — his patience, self-control, and understanding had all been employed to the sole end that when the time came for striking for his country he might strike the more forcibly. But in this problem the cunning of the fox must needs precede the courage of the lion. It was an old head on young shoulders that would read this riddle. His experience already told him

that courage and brawn are vain, unless wit leads the way.

He wasted no time and, within an hour of reading Miranda's letter, made application to see the Commandant. The application was refused, and Burgoyne learned that Captain Short found himself much occupied with preliminary preparations for the approaching peace, but would grant him an interview upon the following day, some time after noon.

Perforce, the young man waited, and occupied his leisure in considering the position of Felix Godolphin. It appeared hopeless at a first glance, and at the second, necessity for practical aid impressed itself on Miranda's lover. She indeed he could not see of any immediate service, and come what might, he felt reluctant to seek assistance from her in an effort that must be laden with grave dangers; but the work could not be carried through single-handed, and his accomplices would have to be found quickly. He permitted himself no plan of action, since to make such at this stage must be waste of time. He waited until he should meet Miranda, and hear the extent of the forces that he might count upon to assist him. She had said there were those ready to give their aid, but that they were few.

The interview with the Commandant of the prisons duly took place, and it was Short who first spoke. His manner proved unfriendly. He lifted a letter from his desk, and Burgoyne recognized Miranda's writing.

"I fancy you may be come on this matter, Mr. Robert Burgoyne," said Captain Short. "Miss Godolphin, whom you know, is concerned for you, and her people would seem to desire your better acquaintance. In a word, I am invited by her to grant you parole, that you

may spend the remainder of the time 'twixt now and the peace at Prince Hall. What say you? When parole was offered three years ago you declined it."

"True, Commandant. In my judgment then I was able to be of practical service with the men here."

"You employed your time doubtfully, however."

Burgoyne laughed.

"I am an American. I threw in my lot with the rest; I shared their hopes and endeavours; I helped to undermine the walls and let us out. I could do no less. But I felt very sure that the enterprise would fail, and was glad, rather than sorry, when it did so."

"No thanks to you that it failed, however."

"True. But I must remind you that I have, nevertheless, stood in the main for order and discipline. I have assisted you in many particulars. Though thrown among the turbulent hordes in No. 4, I always sought to make us law-abiding and reasonable. 'T was I that started the schools, and helped the youngsters to learn to read and write. 'T was I led the men to employ their time in manufacture of useful and ornamental articles, to keep them busy and better their position by earning a little honest money. I have worked hard to serve you and lighten your labours. 'T is not the Americans who had proved most difficult to handle, for obedience is the first requisite in the Land of Liberty; but the Englishmen — your own people — who joined our privateers, induced thereto by high bounties. One of these renegades will make more trouble than half a hundred of us. And you know it, or, if not, your turnkeys do."

"Why do you desire to be gone?"

"For various reasons. I am anxious to become better

acquainted with the Godolphins, for whom I entertain a profound respect and admiration."

"One might have thought that recent events would season that. They will be kindred to a criminal ere long — indeed, are so now. I guess 't is Mistress Miranda here inspires your ardour — and who shall blame you? But she had a graceless dog of a brother. At my own table you met the rascal, and he was impertinent, as I remember. But he goes to answer for his sins ere long. He will be hanged, presently. Have you thought of that?"

"I knew him, Commandant. He was worthy of better things and a better fate. His ideas were noble, but ill marshalled. He wanted kindly hands to guide him."

"I think not so. He was a knave at heart, and full of devilish devices. He flouted the Throne and the Army. He has met his just reward — be sure of that."

"One may still hope for him."

"Only if one is a fool. They will hang him — and hang him in chains to boot."

"I trust not. It is an awful thing for a man's father and sister to be faced with this."

"And they fancy that you can comfort 'em? Is that it?"

"Sir Archer Godolphin was good enough to show me great courtesy when we met at the dedication of the church."

"Then he 's broke indeed, for he was wont to hate your nation as a cat hates a dog. And that not long since."

"It may be that now he takes a larger and a juster view."

"'T will hit him pretty hard, as well it may. For an

honest man to find that he has bred a knave, is a sorry jest of Fate."

"As sorry as common. May I take it, Captain Short, that you have no objection to liberating me on parole? I feel what little I could do here is done; I am even hopeful that I might be of service to these new friends."

"A man on parole can be of little service to anybody, if he 's honest and keeps parole. However, I am not in a mind to grant your request. You will be better employed here, using your great authority to keep the prisoners on their good behaviour."

"I beg you to re-consider that. I am very anxious to accept this invitation."

"So I perceive, and for that reason, as much as any, I refuse you permission to do so. We need not argue the matter. I am conscious that, as an educated and responsible man, you have striven in the main to do your duty in the prisons; you even deserve a measure of credit for your efforts. But that does not justify me at this juncture in presenting you with parole. You might abuse it — how can I tell? In a word, I refuse. The interview is ended."

He rang a bell that stood on the table; two soldiers entered, and Burgoyne was conducted back to No. 4. He felt indignant, yet not much surprised, for Short, since his failure to win Burgoyne's personal friendship and confidence, had been a secret enemy. With reflection, however, a measure of relief overtook Burgoyne, for there was an aspect of his withdrawal on parole that had not occurred to him. "A man on parole can be of little service to anybody — if he 's honest," Short had said, and there was truth in the assertion, for parole meant sharp limitations of liberty, and a very confined

field of action — unless one broke it, an alternative not possible to Burgoyne.

To escape immediately became the problem, therefore, and the young man tackled it with zest.

On the occasion of the next market Charity Caunter found herself presented with a little bone windmill, and when she came to examine it there appeared within two letters — one for Miranda, and one for herself. To her joy, Jacko's daughter discovered that she was to prove instrumental in succouring Benjamin Gun's master; while as for Miranda, she found it in her heart to envy Cherry, who was now to enjoy a privilege denied Burgoyne's own sweetheart.

But the girls spent time together, and busied themselves with Burgoyne's directions.

CHAPTER XXIV

ROBERT BURGOYNE PLAYS THE GIRL

THERE was no time to lose if Burgoyne intended to tackle the mighty problem that his sweetheart had sent him. This he knew very well, and when parole was refused, he swiftly planned other means to be free of the prison walls at earliest opportunity. His scheme demanded aid from within as well as from without, but while his own immediate companions from the *Vermont* were now reduced by the flight of Gun and the death of others to no more than two, numerous Americans declared themselves glad enough to serve Burgoyne and play their parts in the little drama destined to herald his escape. For the rest, Charity Caunter and her mother were equal to doing all that was required.

With the next market-day they came as usual to the yard of Prison No. 4, and with them they brought a boy to bear extra baskets. For there had come an order for two dozen winter cabbages, and this considerable load needed another pair of hands. At the gate a turnkey relieved the lad of his burden, and carried it to Cherry's stall for her. Then, when the customers were admitted, one Toby Tuttle, a coloured man, bore away the cabbages, and presently brought the baskets back to their owners.

Some acerbity marked the chaffering to-day, for Mrs. Caunter, in obedience to the market rates, had put up

prices. The weather was severe, and cost of production became everywhere increased. The regular customers, however, resented this movement, and Andy Midge, the hero with the blackened nose, protested.

"You 're as bad as that old cat-a-mountain of a Lovey Lee, 't other side the market," he said. "She 'd skin a flint, and make shift to live on the parings of her own finger-nails — the hag; but I 'm derned if I thought you was that sort, ma'am. We 've always found you ready to do the fair thing."

"I can't undersell my neighbours, or they 'd soon drive me from market altogether," she explained. "The times are very hard, and 't is no light matter to get eggs at all, nor yet keep the kine healthy in the stalls. I 'm only asking proper prices, Master Midge. And I 'd be very glad to sell for less if I could. You won't get a fine pair o' fowls like these cheaper to-day, at this stall or any other."

"Throw in two of them big sausages, then," he said; "though I 'll bet my life they 're made of a dead horse."

But Mrs. Caunter only laughed at this insult, and shook her head.

"You know very well what goes into Bair Down sausages. Or, if you don't, any sensible man could tell you. Our prime home-fed pork be renowned a long way further than Prince Town, or Dartmoor, either."

"When you bring dem damn fine black puddens 'gain, missy?" asked Tuttle of Charity; and she promised him that the luxury should soon re-appear.

Then Owen Seapach spoke.

"Don't you haggle no more for them chickens, Andy, or else you 'll lose 'em; and hev 'em we must for Captain Burgoyne to-day."

"Don't tell me he 's sick!" cried Mrs. Caunter. "'T would be the last straw, I 'm sure, if that gallant fine man was to be took."

"Sick he is," answered Seapach. "We hope there 's no call to be skeered, but Dr. Magrath pulled a long face this morning. It looks terrible like as if he 'd took the evil. But he 's strong as a lion, and brave as one, and pluck and power are the great things to fight smallpox. It may spoil his beauty, however, like it hev mine. Poor Caleb Holmes hev gone home. They buried him Saturday. He was n't one of us, but we 'd got to be very thick with him. And now, if Captain 's called away, there 'll only be me and Andy Midge left of the lot."

Mrs. Caunter pretended deep concern. She even put her apron to her eyes, but it was dry when she withdrew it again. The men and women were playing a farce for the benefit of the soldiers on guard round about, and the turnkeys, who moved up and down in the prison.

"Dearie me! Master Holmes gone after Master Petersen and the rest, and now Master Burgoyne took bad! Him of all men — such a born leader, and so kind and gentle to us women as have to work for our living! And the life and soul of you all he was, when he came among you. 'T is harsh news — bitter news, without a doubt. But I do hope as he 'll be one of the lucky ones and be spared. Can he let down his food, poor young hero?"

It was Mrs. Caunter who spoke, and Seapach who replied.

"No, the fever 's raging like a tiger in his blood. He only cries out for drink. He eats naught."

"I 'll bring him a bottle of my home-made elderberry wine next week."

"He shall know 't is coming. 'T will do him a power of good to think upon it."

"And I 'm sure I hope as he 'll be spared to drink it," declared Charity, tearfully.

Andy Midge, who had gone to learn how his captain fared, returned presently with news of the sufferer.

"You must n't take on," he said to Mrs. Caunter; "he 's one of the useful men as can't be spared, and I 'm very sure they 'll pull him through. That Dr. Magrath hev fought Death and beat him so often that, given such a man as Captain Burgoyne, 't is any odds but the doctor will win again. What he don't know about the ways of smallpox ain't worth knowing, and when he thinks upon his lady, and peace so near, and one thing and another, such a man as Robert Burgoyne will put up a proper fight — be sure of that."

"In course he will," added Seapach. "Such a man won't let himself be wiped out very easy. He 's a born fighter, and he hev had a shindy with old Skull and Crossbones afore to-day."

But the market was none the less deceived and saddened by this news of Burgoyne's dangerous illness. Inquiries were constantly made, and Charity kept Toby Tuttle and Andy Midge on the run every half-hour to learn how the sick man fared. It was remarkable how many among the humblest of the market folk appeared to know him, and to cherish kindly words spoken by him. A host of messages were dispatched to the supposed sick man, and many presents of dainties from the stalls went along with them.

Toward the end of market came the welcome report that the patient was considered to be a trifle better; and then, when dusk had fallen on the short winter day,

five minutes before the bell tolled to bid the hucksters be gone Robert Burgoyne made his bid for liberty. Each circumstance and incident had been carefully planned and, so far as the actual escape was concerned, there seemed little reason to fear failure, but danger of a sort threatened to overtake one party to the deception, and she was a woman. She, however, did not fear the possibility, and proved very well able to play her part and hold her own.

A brisk rush for the stalls often occurred at the end of the market, and now there moved from the prison a compact little party of men crowded closely together. It comprised Midge, Seapach, Tuttle, and half a dozen others — all in the secret, and very well pleased to assist. The group moved in close company to the Caunters' stall and began offering low prices for the commodities still remaining upon it. A sort of Dutch auction often ended the market, for the folk liked to get rid of everything at the finish, and now, as usual, a lively rally of business and chaff, noise and movement, began along the front of the booths. At none was bidding brisker than where Mrs. Caunter sold her remaining goods. The light failed, and most of the market people were packing up, putting away their stalls and preparing to depart. With a crowd of purchasers, Mary Caunter bartered cheerfully, and drove final bargains; then, amid the din and laughter, Charity Caunter dived beneath the stall for the baskets, and reappeared with two of them, which she began quickly to pack. A moment later the bell boomed out, the Americans moved away still close together, while the Caunters, omitting to take down the trestles and boards, as usual, mingled with the departing crowd, and threaded past the turnkeys at the gate. The

people usually took some little time to depart, and one or two belated ones generally came in for harsh words from the guard for their de.. y. But on this occasion one was later than all the rest, and the yard had become empty, the inner gates were already locked, and the market people had all gone clear of the prisons when a girl, carrying two baskets, ran out from behind the shelter of a cachot — to find herself alone.

When Charity had dived under her stall into a place quite concealed by the crowd in front of it, she had stopped there, and Robert Burgoyne, brought safely out in the midst of the throng of his friends, took her place. He was of small stature, and in a gown and sunbonnet of Charity's, which had reac'ied him that morning under the cabbages, he rose up from beneath the stall, when she sank down there, packed the baskets, and anon, setting boldly forth beside Mrs. Caunter, walked out of the War Prison with the rest of the crowd.

One Harry Bassett, a local man, had charge of the inner gate, and Cherry, full of concern, approached him.

"Oh dear! oh dear! I 'm so sorry, Mr. Bassett!" she cried. "'T is always the way. I 've been putting back the boards and trestles and hurted my hand, so as I could n't do it quick enough. I 'm terrible sorry, and I hope you 'll overlook it."

"You 're most always the last, you lazy minx!" he said, with the key in the lock. "Why, I could have took my oath I saw you go forth three minutes ago with the missis."

"So I did then, and they called me back to put the stall away. I thought as one of the sailors would have done it for me, but they did n't. Please let me out, like a dear man. Mother will fret if I don't join her, and she 's

got enough on her mind for the minute, because my father 's ill to home."

Harry Bassett was a romantic spirit, and loved a pretty face. Where the sex was concerned, he might be led on a silken thread. They were alone, and he leapt at the opportunity.

"Give me a kiss, and I 'll ope the gate — not unless!" he declared.

She looked at him shyly.

"And you tokened, as all the world knows, to Jane White at Postbridge!" she exclaimed.

"Jane 's five miles off," he answered. "I don't want no talk about it. Take it or leave it. A proper kiss now, or I 'll march off and leave you here."

"You 're a bad lot, but nobody 's got eyes like yourn," she said. And then she kissed him heartily. The gallant turnkey thereupon liberated her, and his bosom glowed with conquest. He was, however, a Devonshire man, and not without the caution of his race.

"A masterpiece of a kiss!" he said. "But don't you whisper it to Jane; because if you do that, 't will be the worse for 'e!"

Charity laughed, and promised.

"I ban't the sort to kiss and tell, no more than you be, I should hope," she answered.

Then she ran through the gate, and made haste, and soon disappeared into the gathering dusk beyond the prison precincts.

It was quite dark before she overtook two figures tramping silently toward Bair Down, across the high Moor. Both were clad like women, and one appeared to be attired exactly as Charity herself; but he was the captain of the United States privateer *Vermont*.

Burgoyne dropped his baskets now, took Cherry's hands between his own, and shook them warmly.

"We 've sold 'em!" he said, "and you 're a right brave girl — a splendid girl! My friend, Benjamin Gun, is lucky. Thank you a thousand times, Miss Charity, for the good you 've done won't end here, I hope!"

The girl, weary of acting, broke down and wept.

"Oh, my good Lord! the lies I 've told, and the kisses I 've gived, for you, sir!" she sobbed.

But she dried her eyes quickly enough to see Burgoyne endeavour to scramble out of his skirts. With liberty, he appeared to have thrown off gravity and the responsibility of the War Prison. He was like a boy — freedom intoxicated him for a moment, as though he had taken some heady draught. He tried to dance a hornpipe, and Mrs. Caunter begged him to desist.

"Good powers!" she said. "What a miz-maze of a world it is! There in prison the sailors and the folk were all made sad and sober by the news that you were struck with the evil, and now here you are, in a maid's gown, trying to dance! 'T is beyond belief; but I pray you, kind sir, get calm again quickly, for there be them awaiting you not far off, and you 'll have to go far to-night before you can think yourself safe."

"I tripped in the gown going out of the gate, and as near as possible swore, and ruined all," declared Burgoyne. "But danger 's past, for I 'll have a horse betwixt my legs in an hour. Now lend a hand to fetch me out of this fantastic thing, Charity, and then see that you take gown and bodice and sun-bonnet very carefully home. They are mine, at your own price, and I 'll keep 'em evermore to be a precious heirloom in my family — when I get one!"

They divested him of the clothes, and he chaffed her about the inches of her waist. Then the garments were soon out of sight at the bottom of a basket, and Burgoyne stretched his arms and legs.

Mrs. Caunter explained his course of action.

"She 's in Bair Down Wood along with Trueman Trinny, the innkeeper — Miss Miranda I mean, of course. And you 're to be off on horseback this night to Miss Miranda's aunt at Okehampton; and Trinny 's to pilot you. They 'll have a square meal in the wood, and a flask of strong drink, be sure, and a change of clothes also. Then 't is left for you and Mr. Trinny to do what may be done — if aught can be done — to save poor young Master Godolphin."

"What of Gun?" asked Burgoyne. "I 'll warrant he 's weary of living behind a bag of oats."

But Charity was able to throw light on that matter.

"He lives behind a bag of oats no more, Master Burgoyne. My father hath fallen in love with him. It happened after the famous matter when my father slew that poor man, Blackadder, single-handed. 'T would make you laugh to hear 'em argue; but father be coming round, ban't he, mother?"

"He is," admitted Mrs. Caunter. "Wonders never cease, and little did I think that such a thing could happen on earth; but father 's growing into a reasonable man, in his old age. There was a deal of amazing courage in him that we never guessed; and it seems there was sense in him that we never guessed neither. But Benjamin has to lie low still, till the peace is declared. 'T will be grand news to him to larn that you 're safely brought off."

"I may need him anon," answered the young man,

and then the dark ridges of Bair Down Wood loomed upon the night-hidden Moor.

At their fringes stood three horses, with a man and a woman, and, in a moment, Burgoyne saluted Miranda.

Food waited for him, and a stout suit of clothes, brought by Trueman Trinny. The course of action set for that night was simple, and in half an hour Mary and Charity Caunter were home again, while Miranda and her lover and the innkeeper rode slowly through the great darkness, led by Trueman, to whom the Moor was an open book by day or night.

These men had never met before, but soon a common regard and understanding awoke between them, for they were cast in a mould of mind very similar. Their goal was Okehampton, where dwelt Sir Archer's sister-in-law, Dame Primrose Parlby, a childless widow, and the god-mother of Miranda. Here Burgoyne might lie safely hid enough, while Exeter, the scene of his future exertions, was distant but half a day's ride.

Burgoyne quickly perceived that in Mr. Trinny he had met his equal in pluck, and his superior in experience. Trueman had also thought deeply upon the problem before them, and it wanted not Miranda's visit to him, and her tearful entreaty, to plunge the master of the *Ring o' Bells* into this perilous adventure. "For your sake I 'd do it," said he; "and for my own I 've got to do it, because my Amelia Ann has spoke the word. I 'm in her black books, I warrant you, since I took Workman and thought I was catching Blackadder with him. From the moment 't was found that poor Master Felix was the victim I 've had no peace."

The escaped prisoner perceived, with satisfaction, that Trinny was prepared to take his part in any possible

scheme by which Felix Godolphin could be saved; for as they rode forward through the night the innkeeper put a new complexion on the entire situation, and showed something of his wide resources and knowledge of human nature.

"The point of attack is everything — ab-so-lutely!" he said. "And first there 's the point of time, and second, the point of place. You might think the place is fixed; but it is not; because 't is very certain we can't bring him out of Exeter gaol. You can't walk out of that, as you have just walked out of the War Prison, Cap'n Burgoyne. But there are times coming when he 'll be out of prison; for first, he 's got to stand his trial in court; and second, he 's got to stand his sentence on Heavitree Hill. For us, then, 't is a matter of choice between trying to get him off between the court and the prison, or having a dash for it afterwards — at the last moment. I 've thought a mighty deal upon it, and my own belief is that we stand a better chance to save him at the finish, on the way to the gallows, than any earlier moment. And I 'll tell you why. To bribe the prison people is not to be thought of *before* he 's sentenced; but it might be possible afterwards. Before he 's sentenced, every man's hand will be against him; but after, such is the build of the human mind, the people will shift over, and be sorry for him. Then there 'll be plenty ready to fight on his side; and if, over and above the sentiment of the thing, there 's a lot of money flying about, and certain folk find that humanity and good to their pockets be at one, then we may count to make friends of useful men. To sum up, I say this: Wait for the sentence. If he escaped with his life, well and good. But, since everything 's against that, and the feeling will be to make a

terrible example of the young man, then, should he be condemned to the gallows, we must get to work on the people round him, and make it worth while to organize a rescue."

Burgoyne also had ideas which might fitly have been uttered at this point in Trinny's exposition; but they were of a character so sensational that, for the present, he kept them to himself. On the general question he agreed with Trinny, and in one particular felt more hope than the local man. Miranda, too, mourned the elder's pessimism.

"Why should you think the worst must fall, Mr. Trinny?" she asked. "My father hath hired two King's Counsel, of great fame, to fight for Felix, and 't is their hope to show any honest jury that my brother was led into these evil ways, and that, since no blood has been shed by him ——"

But Trueman interrupted.

"God forbid that I should take too dark a view, or cry woe," said he. "But 't is just that jury of honest men will seek to hang your brother for a pest and enemy to society. See you not that there is no real excuse for him? What would your own father say, were he called to judge another man's son who had done likewise? And his honour, Judge Bradley, hangs for a lamb as soon as a sheep. He takes life easily, and sleeps none the worse. Exeter, until now, has shown no pity. Was not their own good bishop robbed by these gallant gentlemen? I spoke with an attorney two days since — a man very famous for prophesying sentences. 'Workman and Godolphin will be hung in chains, and Kek Brimblecombe sent to Botany Bay.' Thus he has determined the whole course of events."

"Then it 's a case of enlisting sympathy after the sentence, and fomenting that sympathy with cash?" asked Burgoyne.

"Ab-so-lutely! You have it in a nutshell," answered the other. "And the money, mark you, must be ready money. Promises carry very little weight in such a pass. 'T is the sort of work you have to pay for in advance. Were it possible to enlist a mob, at a cost of twenty thousand pound, and have 'em ready at Heavitree when the cart arrived under the gallows — pardon my bluntness, young lady, but this is no time for pretty speeches — were that possible, I say, then we could snap our fingers in the face of the law of England, and bring him off with drums beating and colours flying. But no surprise of that nature is within practical politics. There lacks the time and the machinery to raise a faction for him. We must seek a small number of men, vitally involved. We must find the powerful ones, and offer bribes to tempt them. And bribes, remember, are only practicable under certain circumstances. We cannot offer bribes to those who cannot take them. No man can be asked to give himself away. That 's waste of time. Again, where 's the money coming from?"

"From me, I hope and beg," answered Burgoyne. "It happens that money is of no account with me. I have far more than any sane man can need or put to use. You may handle twice a hundred thousand English pounds, if need be. But the difficulty lies in getting the cash, or making anybody believe in its existence. As you say, it must be found first, and who will trust me or my promises, since I cannot even declare myself?"

Miranda spoke upon this point.

Her Aunt Primrose, albeit not blessed with great

wealth, could be trusted to find ten thousand at short notice. "She will sell the house over her head, and thankfully," said the girl. "This dreadful thing has struck her only less terribly than my father and myself. Sir Archer, too, has resources. There need be no fear that money lacks. And, be that as it may, in no case could the family use the wealth of others for such a purpose."

"Say not that," urged her sweetheart. "All mine is yours, Miranda; and well you know it. Do not deny me my share in this endeavour."

"I 'm good for five or six thousand if 't is needed," said Mr. Trinny. "The thing is to have the money in the bottom of your pocket when you go to your fellow-man over a job like this. 'T is a great argument — stronger than words. Money must flow free, and if Cap'n Burgoyne's stream of gold can't be tapped for the moment, we must find advances. I 'll trust him, anyway; and since he 's got two hundred thousand to invest in this man's life, you 'll do well to let him have his way, young mistress."

It was midnight before Mr. Trinny brought his party down to the heights above Okehampton, and scarce a light twinkled in the little town beneath; but beyond it, over the river, in a park of trees, shone one steadfast gleam, where dwelt Dame Parlby, of Okement Glen.

Through the sleeping streets the horses clattered presently, and over Okement River they passed. Then, plunging into the woods, they reached a handsome square dwelling, faced with a portico of lofty Corinthian pillars. Light shot from the open door, and a little women made a silhouette where she stood at the top of a broad flight of steps to welcome them. Two men were waiting for the horses, and another stood within the portal to assist the

travellers. Dame Parlby knew only her niece of the new arrivals, but she made the others welcome, sat beside them while they ate a hearty supper, listened to Trinny's opinions, and expressed her own.

The lady's view centred in one sure conviction: that a Godolphin on the gallows was unthinkable, impossible, beyond the wit of man to imagine or the power of man to achieve.

CHAPTER XXV

THE MAJESTY OF THE LAW IS UPHELD

ROBERT BURGOYNE stayed but a few days with Dame Parlby, but the knowledge she gleaned of him satisfied the old lady. She was an optimist, and declared her firm belief that her nephew would be given another chance by Providence to justify his existence. She admitted, however, that Providence might require the aid of the young man's fellow-creatures.

Mr. Trinny saw Miranda home again, on the following day — a course she had not designed to take; but Trinny saw deeper into the many problems before them than the lovers, and he pointed out a fact that they had forgotten.

"'T is like this," he said. "Before all else, Captain Burgoyne must keep his liberty, and if you stop here with him he 'll be very like to lose it. Lovers have short memories, and we, that have passed through the fire, must help 'em. Not but I am a very good lover still, as my Amelia Ann would tell you; but that 's neither here nor there. You must look back a minute. Missy here made a pretty straight appeal to Captain Short, at the War Prison, to let you come out on parole — did n't she? There was no sort of doubt in the Commandant's mind that the lady wanted you at Prince Hall. And the curmudgeon refused. But now — now that you 've escaped, what will be the first thought in Short's mind? Why,

Prince Hall; and there he 'll go, and ask for Mistress Miranda in the name of the law. And he will hear that she is from home. He will learn where, and be here before you can cut your nails. Therefore, I say, 'Let me take Miss Godolphin home again, as quickly as may be'; while as for you, you will do well to disappear anon, and lie hidden in the woods, until the search party has come and gone again. For come it will."

Mr. Trinny's advice was followed, and his prophecy came true. He started for home with Miranda at midday and, before dusk, a party arrived at Okement Glen to seek for Robert Burgoyne. But they did not find him.

Two days later the young man went to Exeter and began his investigations. He was still impressed with the possibility of repeating a ruse he had once heard of; but the story was ancient, and amounted to little more than a tradition. He doubted whether it might in reality be physically possible. He spent much of his time about the precincts of the prison, and made friends of the lesser officials, but he was handicapped by the necessity of preserving his own anonymity, and found, even in the smallest matters of bribery, that Trinny was right. To get a letter to Felix Godolphin privately cost twenty pounds.

A lawyer had prepared the case for the young man, and certain counsel of the Western Circuit were briefed on his behalf; but from the first but little hope was held out that Felix Godolphin would escape his doom. The days sped to the trial; then came his Majesty's judges to the Castle at Exeter, and the ponderous business of the Assizes began.

Immense interest centred round the great case of the highwaymen, but while Workman had no friends, there were not lacking, even from the first, a small number who

argued that Godolphin's life should be spared. But the foreman of the jury was one Meddlicott, a tanner, who took a prominent part in local affairs and was, for those days, an advanced and fearless thinker. He influenced the jury against Godolphin in some particulars, though indeed it needed neither the judge's summary and direction nor the bitter attitude of Meddlicott to decide them. Both prisoners were found guilty, and in passing sentence, though the judge discriminated between them, he held their crimes were equal, Workman, in actual commission, Godolphin, because with his superior advantages he had disgraced his class, and ignored the high obligations proper to his rank and birth.

"Too often," said the instrument of justice, "too often do we hear that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor. And with reason might it be urged against authority, were I to make any difference in the sentence that it is my duty to pronounce upon you. But I shall make no such difference. The law of the court is that you be taken to the prison from whence you came, and thence taken to the place of execution; and that there you be hanged by the neck until you both are dead. And further, that your bodies be removed to the Dartmoors, and lifted upon gibbets, and hung in chains, to be a terror and a warning to all evil, malicious, and devilish-minded persons, that they may regard the hard way of the malefactor, and repent them, and turn from their sins. This is the sentence upon you, Felix Godolphin and William Workman; and may the Lord have mercy on your souls. For you," he added, turning to the shaggy form of Kek Brimblecombe, "the law decrees that you be spared to amend your ways. Your sentence is twenty years of penal servitude."

Burgoyne was in court during the two days of the trial, and Trueman Trinny accompanied him. Now indeed had the time come to act, and on the night when the prisoners slept for the first time in the condemned cells, the innkeeper and Burgoyne, who for the present shared a room in a little hostelry near the prison, debated of their action.

"A mob is fickle, and I 'm hoping to stir it to-morrow, now that sentence is pronounced," said Trinny. "But I had n't bargained for Meddlicott and all the rag-tag and bob-tail of Exeter that call him master. However, they have their enemies. I 've got thirty men promised, and each is good for ten more. The difficulty is to make a concerted action. Peaceable citizens have a pretty wholesome dread of bayonets at the best of times. The guard won't be large — fifty soldiers round the carts, I suppose. The way of it is this — so they tell me. At ten o'clock the condemned men will start from prison in two carts. The gallows stand on Heavitree Hill, and there the hangman waits for 'em. He 's a chap called Fenford — one of Jack Ketch's assistants. Jack 's too busy to come himself, I hear at the prison. The condemned men never leave the carts. They go under the gallows, are pinioned and roped — then the carts move away and — the men die. Now, we must try to get our gang waiting round the spot, and pour them pell-mell at the carts. 'T would be a rough and tumble, and like as not the officer of the guard might tell 'em to shoot; but if, on the other hand, we could get at him ——"

"You won't," said Burgoyne. "If there 's one man at that hanging who can't be bought 't will be the officer in command. You might as well have thought to buy the judge. The more I see of this country, the more struck

am I with the sense of honour in high places. 'T is the spirit and tradition of the nation."

"True," answered Trinny; "but that 's a leaven that don't leaven the whole lump. There 'll be others there who might barter honour and glory for a fortune, and the joy of looking forward into their lives with the knowledge they 'd never have to do another stroke of work. 'T is a very common instinct — to get away from work at any cost."

"I know it. There will be men there upon whom the matter turns, and they will have their price. That brings me to what I 've got to say, and I 'd like you to hear it, weigh it, and consider very carefully whether 't is worth a thought before we go further."

Then Burgoyne revealed his scheme, and the other listened with profound attention.

"I 'm not declaring it to be so much as possible," said the American; "but it may be; and if it were, then all the proposed business of a general riot and a sort of public rescue is evaded. At best, the result of that would be very doubtful. It might mean bloodshed, and the sacrifice of innocent persons, and a general upheaval of society in this city. Indeed, it must do so. But I 'd chance that for his life — I own it — since his life to me at present is the supreme thing, for his sister's sake, and worth all the rest of the lives in Exeter put together. As I say, however, the end is by no means assured, even if such means justified the end; whereas if we take the other course — always assuming it to be physically possible — then the end is rendered more likely — for this reason. In the latter case, instead of dealing with a mob, we are dealing at most with nine or ten men. Indeed, two are only vitally involved. For the rest, Godolphin himself

must play his part, though that will be difficult enough, I grant you."

Trinny nodded thoughtfully.

"'T is a stroke of genius — I never heard such a fine idea in all my born days!" declared the innkeeper. "Two, you say — two before all the others anyway — for without the hangman and the doctor on our side we can do nothing."

"Already I know the doctor of the gaol," declared Burgoyne. "I scraped acquaintanceship over a steak at this inn. He often sups here. He is a vain man, and was very ready to talk. A man who might be venal, in my judgment."

"That 's a tower of strength, for we may take it that the hangman is not likely to hold very exalted moral notions. If he can serve us he will, no doubt. After all, he comes first. If what you say is possible, then to him we must look. He may lie in the gaol, or stop at an inn. 'T will be easy enough to find out that from the prison people. Given those two, then I see a glimmer of daylight. But we must get to Godolphin somehow, and tell him what to expect."

"I 've thought of him," answered Burgoyne. "It 's hard to reach a condemned man, I understand, but there are some who can't be denied their farewell of him. Supposing, therefore, that the plot promises to work, then I shall bid my sweetheart come to Exeter, with her Aunt Primrose Parlby, or her uncle Septimus, to take everlasting leave of him. Then the aunt — yes, it must be she, for she 's a fighter and the clergyman is not — Aunt Primrose keeps the warders away, that brother and sister may speak their farewells in peace. And so Godolphin learns what may be his part in the grim play.

For the rest, if by good chance all goes as we would have it, there is the inquest. There our medical friend must help us."

"Sufficient for the hour," declared Trinny. "Your plan is clear, and we have only to weigh it against mine, since I can see no third course. You will convince me easy enough that your plan is the better. Put not your trust in men — unless man has failed you."

They talked long, and decided finally that Burgoyne's proposition, provided the hangman and prison surgeon pronounced it possible, should be attempted.

"Literally, 't is neck or nothing," said the American. "No words will hit the situation better. The possibility is for expert knowledge to determine; but given so much, I 'll wager we can bring him off. If nature can do that, money will effect the rest."

Trueman Trinny agreed.

"You 're right, and I 'll tell you why. Had they meant to bury the poor blades within the prison walls — a thing often done in this country, as you may know — then our difficulties would be far greater than they are; but for once I approve of hanging in chains. There 's much to be said for it, and Master Godolphin should be well content to suffer the same physic that his friends measured to his father!"

"There was a thought that Sir Archer would himself come to Exeter," answered Burgoyne. "Indeed, he made ready to do so, against all advice; but by good chance his agonies of mind have brought upon him a severe attack of gout, and he lies exceedingly ill at Prince Hall. I mourn his danger, but he would have been worse than useless here."

"Your lady will have told him that his son has good

friends, and that he must not abandon hope," said Trinny; "but 't is only right for the present that the name of those at work should be hid — even from him — and that she will be clever enough to do."

Upon this conclusion the men slept, but with dawn both were afoot and busy. They planned their labours, and the more delicate duty fell to Burgoyne, for it was arranged that he should approach the doctor of the gaol. As for Trinny, he proposed to add to his circle of friends about the prison, and learn when the executioner would reach Exeter, and where he would reside.

CHAPTER XXVI

WHEREIN IT APPEARS THAT ALL MEN HAVE NOT THEIR PRICE

PERHAPS no licensed apothecary ever entertained a profounder respect for himself and his endowments than Dr. Samuel Sparrow. His experience of life was small, his good fortune considerable. He was an able man, but many as good as he had sought the position he now occupied, and only a sentiment assured his success. His father had been surgeon to the county gaol before him, and it seemed reasonable to hope that in the person of his son the admirable tradition of the elder Samuel Sparrow might persist. It did so. None ever quarrelled with the man's performance of his duties; and if, as it happened, Dr. Sparrow regarded himself as occupying a position of greater significance in the universal scheme of things than was really the case, his vanity hurt no one, and afforded a source of innocent merriment to his colleagues. Opportunities for laughter are not of generous frequency in a penal establishment, and thus the idiosyncrasies of 'Cock' Sparrow, as the doctor was called behind his back, had a measure of value. He was popular with the officials, and therein promised to appear his usefulness to Robert Burgoyne.

Vain men are an easy prey, and the American discovered, swiftly enough, that to become the friend of Samuel Sparrow needed no dipiomacy. He had only to

play the patient listener, and express his hearty admiration of the doctor's parochial and professional achievements, to win Sparrow's good-will. Whether, however, when it came to bribery and corruption, the man would prove as easily managed, remained to be seen. The most sociable of surgeons, he immediately accepted the first invitation offered to dine with his guest. All went easily, and a time came when the cloth was removed, and two bottles of port set upon the table, with a box of tobacco, and another of 'Churchwarden' pipes.

Then Dr. Sparrow expanded, and related many stories of his greatness, so that at last the moment was reached when Burgoyne could enter upon his task. He opened fire with a broadside of flattery.

"If there 's one thing strikes me as more remarkable than another about you, 't is the largeness of your mind. I never knew a man more many-sided. Your conversation is not only brilliant, but amazingly logical. You play about a subject, and cast a new ray of light upon it from a dozen different angles; but you always come swooping back to the main theme. No doubt this is the result of a clear intellect. I should have thought that with a mind like yours you might have favoured the law, and aspired to the highest honours in it. This place is not big enough for you."

"You are probably right," said the other. "I have reason to believe that I might have attained to eminence had circumstances been more kindly. But *res angusta domi* demanded that I should follow in my father's shoes as speedily as possible. I was his apprentice, you see, and they were naturally glad to secure my services."

"I always think the physician's and surgeon's work must be very painful; and yours is surely peculiarly so.

That brings me to my reason for being here. I am a friend of one of the condemned men. It is very terrible to reflect that a life of such promise must be cut off so soon."

"It is."

"Does it not try you exceedingly, to be present at an execution?"

"I cannot say that it does. One is sorry for the unfortunate sufferer; but as a rule there exists no shadow of doubt that he has earned his punishment."

"But in the case of poor Felix Godolphin there is much doubt. There is no real vice in him. He is full of noble ideas and worthy ambitions."

"Then he should not have sought the company of Blackadder and Workman, who were neither noble nor worthy."

"I see you cannot sympathize with him," said Burgoyne; "but you are a man of vivid imagination, and will readily feel for his old father and unhappy sister."

"Of course. I am the most humane of men."

"I believe, were it in your power, you would see the justice of giving this young fellow another chance," hazarded the American.

"It is possible that I might."

"There was a case in America of which I heard from an American. Their physicians and surgeons are men of great originality and amazing skill. An innocent man was condemned to be hanged, yet so convinced were certain persons that the sentence was profoundly unjust that they actually approached the doctor, whose position was similar to your own. He, too, happened to be on the side of the prisoner, and such was his amazing ability that the patient's life did not pay the forfeit."

"He was not hanged?"

"Yes, he was; but not, as the phrase goes, 'until he was dead.'"

Dr. Sparrow considered this remarkable statement and, while he did so, the other spoke again.

"The gratifying sequel is worth mentioning, for it shows how a special Providence took hand in the affair. The innocence of the man was subsequently proved and a terrible legal blunder averted. I only mention the case as showing what amazing fellows some of the American surgeons must be."

"No man on earth could have done it single-handed," declared the doctor. "Unless he of whom you speak was medical man and hangman both."

"Nay, I say not that. Maybe the hangman had his orders. The two worked together, and for all I know, a host of minor officials may have been in the secret also. But, even at that, it is a scientific achievement probably beyond the power of anybody in this country. I mention it, because, if men capable of performing such a feat existed in England, one might wish they had the charge of this execution. Not only for the sake of the prisoner do I say this, but for their own also."

"You mildly interest me," said Dr. Sparrow. "Suppose, for argument, that I were able, by collusion with the public executioner, to save Godolphin's life. Such a thing is of course impossible to a man of honour, and a public servant like myself; but supposing I were to tell you that such is my ability, resource, and nerve at a crisis, that I could perform this — conjuring trick — what would you say?"

"First," answered Burgoyne, "I would say that you must not let any question of honour or duty to your

employers influence you. A man's life is a question above all questions, and if you listened to me on that subject, I would soon convince you that by giving this youth another opportunity to justify his existence, you would be doing the State the highest service. The sentence is an automatical thing, but it is absolutely improper. It is equitable, but grossly unjust. To put Godolphin and Workman in the same category for instance — what utter unreason and cruelty to the lesser criminal! Therefore, I say that you must not let your honour be in question. You have just as much right to think the man's life too precious to waste as you have to think he deserves hanging; and if, as I believe, in your subtle mind you see a hundred reasons why this sentence should be evaded, then, as a distinguished man of science — a man of great originality and courage and force of character, I see no reason why you should not triumph over injustice and single-handed, if need be, prevent the law of the land from doing this terrible wrong. It might even be your duty to do so, always supposing that it were possible. Of course the possibility is the thing, and I can hardly believe, brilliant surgeon though you are, that you could do this, even with the help of the man, Fenford, who performs the actual execution."

"It would be an achievement of genius."

"Undoubtedly, and I do not hesitate to regard you as a genius; but even genius has its limitations and cannot do the impossible. Now to answer the second part of your question. You ask me, assuming this thing was within human power and you undertook to accomplish it, what should I say. Well, my dear Doctor, though I am commissioned to open the question, I hesitate to touch on this delicate side, because you would naturally demand

credentials, and the only credentials I can offer you are represented in the crude form of cash."

The other shrugged his shoulders.

"Under the peculiar circumstances, I do not know that I should feel called upon to resent that," he said. "There is a time for sentiment, but this is not the time. We have it on the highest authority that a labourer is worthy of his hire."

The American expressed admiration.

"For a poet you are amazingly practical! But I hasten to add that, behind the money, are people of highest distinction and power. It would not be too much to say this is an international question, and I can at any rate assure you that representatives of the United States of America are interested in it, as well as the unfortunate young man's own distinguished family and connexions. In fact, to put it on the plane of monetary remuneration, as you kindly condescend to do, then I may tell you that it is no exaggeration to say that money is no object. Had it been possible for you to save Felix Godolphin, your worldly position would have been fundamentally changed; and even now, assuming that you will hear me on his character, and permit me to appeal to your sense of justice and fair play, I believe it might be possible to convince you that the attempt may be made without the slightest stain on your honour."

Dr. Sparrow nodded.

"In that respect I believe you are correct," he said. "I have a subtle and a far-reaching sense of justice. Indeed, I have always felt profoundly sorry for Mr. Godolphin. I am inclined to believe that it would be possible for you to convince me that his life ought to be saved; and once do that, I should certainly attempt it

—supposing, of course, that I could command the necessary assistance. To save him single-handed is impossible for anybody but the Almighty."

"I am hopeful the argument that might prevail with you would be equally satisfying in another quarter," answered Burgoyne; "indeed, a man such as the common hangman may be supposed to be, would hardly stand out for an instant, if he knew that you were on his side. Let us proceed then, and I will assume, for the sake of argument, that you are convinced we shall be doing right to save Godolphin, if it be possible."

"You shall prove that to me afterwards," declared Dr. Sparrow. "As you say, for the moment you may take me as convinced that such an attempt redounds to my credit rather than not. Understand me; I cannot guarantee success in such a perilous business. I run enormous, prodigious risks. I may fail. We are, therefore, faced with the alternative, and since you are desirous to discuss the situation in terms of filthy lucre, I bend to your wishes. First, then, what would be the figure in the event of failure, and second, what do your friends pay in the event of success?"

"Apart from the case altogether," answered Burgoyne, "I believe my friends, had they made your acquaintance, might have been tempted, for the good of mankind at large, to release you from this inferior position, and place you in one where your great gifts would have wider play and freer scope in the cause of humanity; but, as it happens, if we succeed in our enterprise, you will have actually earned their undying gratitude; while even if you fail, the attempt undertaken against long odds, and against great difficulties, must compel their admiration. But we shall not fail. Such is my faith and trust in you,

that I am convinced we shall not fail. In a word, you will have fifty thousand pounds if Godolphin reaches his friends alive. Your duty is simply to see that he still lives when he leaves the prison on the night after the supposed execution. The procedure is, of course, as familiar to you as it is to me. The culprits go to Heavitree Hill, are hanged, cut down, taken back to the gaol, and subjected to an inquest. Anon they are driven to their destination on Dartmoor and suspended in the iron cages there hung upon lofty gibbets by the roadside. Well, you have to see that Godolphin leaves the prison precincts alive, and fifty thousand pounds are yours. You may enjoy the very rare privilege not only of doing your duty to a suffering and ill-used fellow-creature but also of earning a sum large enough materially to help your progress through the world. You are no longer young, and fifty thousand pounds has great possibilities and powers of helping a man to make the journey down hill without much painful jolting."

The medical man was impressed by the magnitude of the sum.

"And if I fail?"

Burgoyne put his hand in his pocket.

"Here are notes for two thousand pounds," he said. "If you fail, that sum will solace your disappointment. But you'll not fail. This is but a 'refresher,' as the lawyers say. Fifty more like it await you."

Dr. Sparrow took the notes and put them in his pocket.

"One more question," he said. "How happens it that America is interested?"

"You touch a secret," answered the other; "but such is my confidence in your honesty and discretion that I can trust you to keep it for the present. In a word, this

man's sister, Mistress Miranda Godolphin, is betrothed to a gentleman from the State of Vermont, one of the wealthiest men in America. He should be a prisoner at the War Prison, on Dartmoor, at this moment."

"I might convey my wife and myself to that country — afterwards — I mean America," said the doctor. "I confess, I have always felt a little circumscribed in my native land. And, now I think upon it, I have relations in America — descendants of certain Sparrows who settled in America many years ago."

"You will be welcome without a doubt. But I have spoken enough. The fact that you take these notes informs me you are going to make this great experiment. But how do you set about it?"

"I must see the hangman," answered Dr. Sparrow. "He arrives the day after to-morrow, that he may witness the gallows set up to his satisfaction. He lies at a lodging in the district of St. Thomas — a little house by the river. He will keep his identity a secret, and none will know his business there. But I have heard of him, and when Jack Ketch was here some time agone, to turn off a brace of sheep-stealers, he spoke of Fenford, and declared him to be a promising and original artist. He has ideas, and is destined to make his mark in his calling. Upon his arrival he must be seen at once, and the situation made clear. There will, however, be others beside Fenford to suborn. Certain of the gaolers cannot fail to learn the truth. You may leave them to me, and a thousand pounds will square them all. The coroner, however, is a man whose position and importance will necessitate a more tempting inducement. He must be on our side."

"He shall have all he asks for. You shall learn his price.

I am hopeful that a spirit friendly to the prisoner will presently appear in the community. These things are productive of strange conflagrations of feeling. There are, indeed, many people in Exeter who already express indignation that Felix Godolphin is to suffer the extreme penalty."

"So much the better," declared Dr. Sparrow. "I believe my chief difficulty will lie with the coroner's jury. But, should sympathizers be upon it, our chances are improved. For the rest, I can do nothing until I have seen Fenford and heard what he has to say. There is coming in, a new way of hanging. 'T is called the 'long drop.' Strictly speaking, a man so slain is not hanged at all. His neck is broken and, when properly performed, such an execution is to be preferred to the old method, for it must be instantaneous. But, for our purpose, this is out of the question, as all the King's surgeons and all the King's men can't mend a broken neck. I 'll set my face against any new-fangled nonsense of that sort. We must stick to the old way, and go mighty carefully at that."

Considerable further speech passed between them, and Dr. Sparrow finally departed, very deeply impressed with the great task before him. He believed that it was possible to achieve it; but his part was not more important than that of the hangman, and whether the unknown would prove equal to mastering the doctor's instructions, and carrying them out in a way to escape suspicion under the gallows, remained to be seen. Sparrow's sanguine spirit, however, took success as granted. He returned home in a frame of mind very exalted and, without telling his wife of the amazing proposition laid before him during the course of the evening, none the less hinted at amazing adventures in the near future, at vast changes

in their state and prospects, at the possibility of retirement, followed by voyages and wonderful experiences in new countries. She knew his flamboyant spirit, and was neither elated nor deprived of sleep; but a little concern she did feel, for Dr. Sparrow, in his most expansive and high-soaring visions of the future, had never before reached quite such a pinnacle as this.

It was arranged that the doctor should see the executioner on the day that followed Mr. Fenford's arrival at Exeter; but in this matter preliminaries rested with Mr. Trinny, who judged himself better able to tackle such a customer than Burgoyne. The plans were already laid, and nothing remained to be done but approach the executioner; for even though Fenford might declare any interference with the law impossible, the surgeon of the gaol was quite prepared to show him his mistake. Under the old conditions of capital punishment in England, it was possible to hang a man without actually destroying him; and this, Sparrow knew. The risks were, of course, enormous, and the element of chance had to be allowed for; but he believed that, given certain circumstances, what had happened more than once by accident might deliberately be planned and performed.

To Lot Fenford did Trueman Trinny go, after dark on the night of the executioner's arrival by coach from Bristol. Fenford was not known by that name at his lodgement, but the prison officials were familiar with the man's pretended name, and Trueman, on asking to see "Mr. Burford," was duly shown in. The hangman, who had just arrived, supposed that Mr. Trinny came from the prison. He was eating his supper, and asked the visitor to join him in a glass of beer.

Lot Fenford proved to be a young man with a hard, clean-shaven face and close-cropped brown hair. His countenance betokened character, for his mouth was firm and finely modelled. The lips were not thin. His eyes distinguished his countenance, and were large and brilliant — the eyes of an enthusiast or fanatic.

Mr. Trinny shook hands, drank a glass of beer, and then offered Mr. Fenford a cigar. Such a gift surprised the hangman, and he accepted it.

"You do yourselves well in Exeter seemingly," he said. "We can't run to cigars where I come from."

His voice was slow, deep, and agreeable. He lighted up, and Mr. Trinny studied him, and calculated on the safest method of approach.

"No doubt work and money are hard to find — else you would n't be on this job."

"Yes, I should," answered the other instantly. "There 's no call for me to be a hangman. I 've got a father, a cabinet-maker, who is very well-to-do. I 'm at this business for choice, and I 'm not ashamed of it. Men have got to be hanged — worse luck — hundreds every year — and there 's a right and a wrong way of hanging them. I stand for the right way. I labour in the interests of humanity. I often smile bitterly enough when I hear my business scorned and hated. Why, there 's thousands of men in the world would n't shake my hand — men that call themselves good Christians too! But I 'm conscious of right. I 've set my hand to the plough, and I won't turn back till I 've made death by hanging the most scientific, painless, and certain end in the world. 'T is a fight just now between me and Mr. Ketch, for he 's all for the old way, and I 'm all for the new. I invented the new. In time to come, when my

way is generally followed, and his has been forgotten, I shall be known as Lot Fenford, the merciful hangman — him who invented the 'long drop'!"

Enthusiasm for humanity blazed in the man's eyes. Had he been proclaiming a new gospel, or bringing a new message of peace and good-will into the world, he could hardly have exhibited greater emotion. Mr. Trinny was quick to note these surprising indications.

"Well done you!" he said. "You 'll have served your country well, if you can lessen the pain of death for them who have to die. And you must have the pluck of an army to take on such a job against all the prejudice that exists against it. You 're ahead of your time, and no doubt you find it hard to make the authorities fall in with your views."

"I do," admitted Fenford; "there 's none stick to the old paths like prison people. Now and then I 'll get a governor agree to let me do it my own way; but, as a rule, they turn the matter over to the doctor, who 's supposed to know most about it, and so often as not the doctor 's against me, and will have it done in the barbarous old fashion."

"Dr. Sparrow at Exeter gaol 's like that," declared Trinny. "He 'll have it the old way — to my certain knowledge."

Fenford shrugged his shoulders.

"More fool him. All the same, I reckon you 're wrong, for Mr. Ketch, who hanged a couple of sheep-stealers here last year, said that Dr. Sparrow was all for the 'long drop.'"

"He 's changed his mind, then," declared Trueman, "and in this case I may tell you there 's a very good reason."

"That there can never be," answered the other.

"Wait and listen to me, then. But first, before I come to a bit of important and private business, I 'd like to hear more of the old way and the new. The world 's full of change — 't is change that keeps it sweet, and prevents it decaying and coming to naught. I see change everywhere, and all for the better in the long run. The tide be coming in slow and sure, and, though many say the world's no better than it was, for my part I think and believe it is. There 's work for all that will to work, and a power of doing good in the world for all who want to. And never d'id I see a more striking instance of that than in you, who sit in front of me at this moment. You may be said to be the high-water mark of hopeful change; for if there was one busy man in the world who might be expected not to want it better, but rather worse, a hangman 's that man. Yet here are you — Lot Fenford — doing your part in your own grim business, to lighten the grief of the world, and help those who have got to leave it. To speed the parting guest is a very friendly, proper thing, in my opinion, and who should know that better than me? But there are times when the guest must not be sped. There are good men come to the gallows by accident — men who were never intended for it. And you 'll grant it spoils a man's usefulness to hang 'im — ab-so-lutely."

But Mr. Fenford lacked humour. He did not smile, but looked doubtfully at Trinny, and puffed his cigar.

"You 're pleased to joke," he said. "Now I find little in life to joke at, and nothing in my profession."

"Nor yet do I. 'T is far too interesting to joke about and, by the same token, tell me more. 'T is a dark branch of learning, too much hidden, and too little understood.

I 'm very willing to serve you, and preach the new way to all who 'll hear; but at the same time I reckon that there are some advantages in the old. For instance, supposing it was planned to save a man's life at the last. The long drop 's fatal, and breaks his neck; but the other way — no doubt a man like you, who has made a science of his business — no doubt if it was worth your while, you could let a chap off with his life?"

The other nodded.

"It could be done," he said. "What 's happened before may hap again. I 'm very well used to hemp — ever since my mother had me struck with a hangman's rope to cure St. Vitus' dance — and what I don't know about such a thing is not worth knowing — to say it in all modesty. Yes, with a doctor's help, you could so order it — in the old way, out of a cart — that a murderer might be cut down merely unconscious, and not throttled. He might not even be insensible. 'T would depend on the man for that. His life would rest on the way the rope fitted to his neck. There was one man, before Mr. Ketch, who let off a chap like that. 'T is well known in the business. The damned rogue saved a gentleman, and got two thousand guineas by it!"

Mr. Trinny felt deeply interested, for here appeared proof positive that the scheme of Burgoyne was practicable. But he began to grow very doubtful of the hangman. He had never heard of such a man as Fenford; he had never dreamed that even into the foul duties of the gallows enthusiasm and the spirit of humanity might creep. Immense caution and foresight animated Trueman, and he avoided an error that few would have escaped at this juncture. Instead of striking immediately, and endeavouring to bribe Mr. Fenford, he perceived that

this task would prove by no means so easy as might have been anticipated. He held off, therefore, and came very gradually to the point at issue.

"Just powers!" he said. "However did he do it? But I doubt you don't know. "You 'll tell me he carried his secret away with him, and his cash to boot."

"What I don't know about hemp is not worth knowing," repeated the other. "It did n't matter the old way: there was no strain to speak of; but the new way, with a heavy man ——"

He proceeded to details that did not interest Mr. Trinny, who listened patiently, however, and did not interrupt the enthusiast until he had finished. Then Trueman brought the subject back.

"I can see that," he said, "and I 'm with you entirely. Looked at in the right spirit, you are doing a useful and proper thing, and you 'll get your reward, no doubt. But now, as to the other point. What I 'm interested in is to know how you 'd save a chap if you had to do so. You shall hear why I ask presently."

Mr. Fenford proceeded to explain how, by a certain adjustment of the noose, suffocation might be avoided.

"'T would be touch and go at best," he said, "and I should have to watch it mighty close, and cut him down as quickly as I dared. Then the doctor would have to be in it, and the hanged man, too. If he was unconscious, as he probably would be, the dangerous moment would be when he came round again. But if it was perfectly done, and he had sense to sham death when he was laid in the coffin, afterwards, then he might be saved. If the coroner and his jury were very inquiring, of course they 'd find out the man was n't dead; but so far as the actual hanging was concerned, if I had the job, I 'd bring him

down alive. The rope would have to be doctored, mind you."

"Show me," said Mr. Trinny. "It will be worth your while. This interests me a great deal."

The other looked at him suspiciously.

"Are you in the business?" he asked.

"Not I, friend. I have my own. My dead men are empty bottles."

Mr. Fenford went to a box, in the corner of his room, and brought out a rope.

"The best Manilla hemp," he said. "Feel it — pliant and smooth as silk. Jack Ketch don't believe in 'em. 'You 'll have one of them things break with a heavy patient some day,' he said to me. But I know better. Now follow me. If I was going to save a man I should work into the rope that made the running noose a good heavy length of split cane. The strain would be to the side of the man's neck, and the windpipe would be protected. If 't was done just right, there 's nothing to kill the man at all for five or six minutes; but 't is any odds he loses consciousness, because the blood vessels are blocked a bit."

Mr. Trinny mastered every detail, and saw how the rope strands might be untwisted, and the cane inserted. Then he spoke.

"Now, my lad, we know where we are, and I 'll tell you why I 'm so keen set to hear all about this little business. There 's an innocent man to be strung up the day after to-morrow, and his name is Felix Godolphin."

The other stared.

"Innocent! He 's been justly tried and condemned, I suppose?"

"Not justly. Granted that he kept bad company, and

made mistakes — well, so have we all, some time or other. But he must n't die for it."

"That 's no concern of mine," answered the other.

"But it 's going to be. A good deal depends upon this business. You can save him, and only you. We 'll leave his guilt or innocence in other hands. That 's not your affair; but you may take it from me, who know, that the law is doing a terrible wrong. The point for you to consider is whether you 'll show your skill in this matter, and help his friends to get him off."

Fenford rose, and pointed to the door.

"You can be gone," he said. "You don't know your company. If the law is doing wrong, let the law look to it. That is no reason why I should. I am a Christian man, and an honest man, and the minister of the law. My work is to put these unfortunate rascals out of the world as swiftly and painlessly as it may be done; and that I shall do, at the appointed time."

The other considered.

"You 're a fine chap," he answered, "a damned sight too fine to be hanging highwaymen, however high your motives. Consider, since you want to help humanity, on what a much grander scale you could set about it if you were rich and powerful."

"Money earned by a lie would profit no man. If you offered me a thousand pounds to queer the rope and save a convicted thief, I should refuse."

"Think twice."

"Go!" answered the other. "Had you known me, you would have saved yourself the trouble of this visit. I refuse to consider it."

"Give others credit for good intentions, as well as yourself. It is very vital to many interests that this

young man should be saved. Why, if you knew him, you would find him much like yourself, Mr. Fenford! An enthusiastic young rip, and his only fault was a mistake at the outset of his career. He 's quite as keen to set the world right as ever you are. Let me tell you his story."

"No," answered the hangman. "I won't hear it. 'T is useless. He hath been tried and found guilty. He must answer elsewhere. It is not my work to consider the justice of the sentences that I am called to carry out."

Mr. Trinny argued for an hour, but in vain. Then, as a last resort, he came to money.

"Well, I 've done my best to save a good man from death, and I 've used every argument that I can hit upon — from the Bible, and from the heart. And I tell you, Mr. Lot Fenford, it puzzles me uncommon to know how such a right-down proper sportsman as you should be so hard — so cruel hard, and lacking in charity. I was n't going to mention cash, because you 're not that sort, and in a thing like this the appeal is first to the man, not his position in the world, or need, or greed. But, since you 're bent on doing some good in the world, and know, as well as I do, what a power is cash in clever hands, then I must say what I was sent to say. In a word, money is no object here. You can name your own price. I 'm not hoaxing. There 's a man behind this who is going to marry Felix Godolphin's sister — a wise and a famous man. He knows all about it, and will do anything in his power to save his future wife's brother. He 's an American, and has more money than you or I could count if we began now and lived to be as old as Methuselah. You can name your own price, and the man himself will come

to see you to-morrow. And for my part, I wish to God he 'd come now, for he is cleverer than I, and would have convinced you against your will. Think, before you answer, what good you could do with ten thousand pounds, my lad."

"Never!" answered the other. "I will not do this thing. My conscience is clean; my work has not hidden the hope of heaven from me. I am angry at this offer. I understand that those who love this man would willingly save his life if they could. But I will not be a party to the attempt. My duty I shall do."

"Will you see my friend?"

"No, I will not."

Mr. Trinny considered, and nodded his head.

"So be it. You will bear me witness, Mr. Fenford, that I have done my best to influence you."

"You have. I am a reasonable man. I do not blame you for making the attempt. But, in my own mind, I am fully convinced that there is no reason why these men should not be removed from the world, for they have failed, after ample opportunity, to justify their existence."

"Suppose it were possible to convince you that Felix Godolphin were innocent?"

"In that case I should decline to perform the execution."

"But another would, and the result would be the same: an innocent man would die. Whereas you, and only you, could save him."

"He is not innocent, in my opinion, and a million of money would not tempt me from my duty."

Trinny rose to depart, and held out his hand.

"You 're a good fellow, and I respect you, though I

can't pretend exactly to understand you. Good-night. If ever I, too, am misjudged, and come to the gibbet, then I hope we may meet again."

The other replied without emotion.

"Think not that I hunger for this poor man's blood. Devoutly I wish it were in my power to save him; but the law alone can do that. I will pray to God this night for a reprieve. Once before, at the secret entreaty of a man's mother, I so prayed, and my prayer was answered. The man was pardoned."

The innkeeper examined the other very carefully, as they stood side by side; but he spoke no more, and a few moments later took his leave.

"Gosh!" he said to himself. "The surprise of my life! A hangman that ought to have been a parson! Well, he's had his say, and a pretty long say too. And now, Trueman Trinny, my old fox-hunter, how are you going to get out of this? Amelia Ann, my dear, if you could see the fix your one and only is got into this evening, you'd almost be sorry for him. No, you would n't: you'd only say, 'With a mind like yours, Mr Trinny, you ought to be quite equal to such a trifle!'"

CHAPTER XXVII

THE · ·L OF HEAVITREE JUSTIFIES ITS NAME

MIRANDA GODOLPHIN obtained permission to take farewell of her brother, and she came to Exeter for that purpose. The reverend Septimus had already visited the unhappy youth, and helped him to make his peace with God. He had then, quite broken and reduced to tottering age, been conveyed back to Prince Hall, for his brother lay in sore need of him. But with Miranda came her aunt, Dame Primrose Parlby, and she was permitted to see her nephew also. They put up on the previous night at the inn, where lodged Robert Burgoyne, and, upon the following day, at noon, were ushered to the condemned man's cell and permitted to spend an hour with him. Warders attended them; but the elder lady succeeded in pressing a note for a hundred pounds into the hand of each man present, and for this she prayed a trifling privilege, that they found it not difficult to grant.

"Let the girl speak to her brother out of earshot," she said. "You are men — doubtless you have children of your own, and can guess what means this awful and eternal farewell. My niece bears last words to her brother from his father, who is too ill to be here. You will readily see that it can harm no man for these messages of affection and forgiveness to be delivered."

The old lady wept, as she spoke, and the guard was

disarmed, not only by her tears, but the scrap of crumpled paper pressed upon each of them.

Not for long, however, did Miranda speak in secret, for soon she turned to her aunt.

"Felix would bid you 'good-bye,' dear Aunt Primrose," she said. "He has heard all that I have been told to tell him. He would rather we did not stop longer."

Miranda wept, and the haggard prisoner was also deeply moved.

"Tell my father that his forgiveness has made the ordeal light for me," were his final words. "Tell him that I repent from the bottom of my heart for the thing that I have done, and trust my Saviour's mercy to give me another chance in another world."

The ladies withdrew, and Miranda insisted on returning home without any delay. Her aunt accompanied her, and in a post-chaise they started before dusk to return to Prince Hall. At Moretonhampstead, however, Dame Parlby's own carriage awaited her, and she left her niece and returned directly to Okehampton, while Miranda proceeded over the Moor. Her impatience was extreme, and the post-boy did all he could to lessen it and gratify her cry for speed.

Then dawned the morning of the double execution, and Workman and Godolphin, who had not seen each other since their trial, met again for the last time.

Workman was much surprised to see the other.

"My stars! Didn't you get off?" he asked. "I thought your friends would have raised the devil for you. Poor lad — then we go together! I 'm sorry you 've had such a short run for your money."

The victims, cast for death on the capital charge, rode each in a separate cart, and now that which conveyed

Godolphin to the gallows went on before, so that there was no more speech between them. Soldiers marched beside the carts, and a shouting mob straggled around the procession. The officials took no part in it. The sheriff, the governor of the gaol, the medical man, and the executioner would await the culprits at Heavitree.

Lying before each prisoner, across the front of the cart in which he rode, was a black coffin, and both men were heavily manacled. The dismal show wound through the streets of Exeter, and every window was full of staring faces as it passed by. Then, after a journey of three miles to Heavitree, they came where, in the midst of an open space, twin gallows stood. Until this morning the theatre of the final scene had been hidden by a hoarding, so that those responsible might do their work in peace; but now the screen was gone, for at that time the law demanded that executions should take place in the face of all men. Nor had Lot Fenford won his way, for the gallows were of the old pattern, and there was no scaffold to fall beneath the drop.

Ten thousand people had assembled, and half a regiment of infantry stood round the two gallows. Beside it were grouped the officials. The day was bright and sunny, and the red coats and glittering accoutrements of the soldiers flashed, and made a gay contrast with the sombre attire of those who waited in the midst. Darkest of all was the silent minister of the law. He stood aloof, and none spoke with him. He was clad entirely in close-fitting black. A black cap covered his head to the ears, and his face was concealed behind a mask. The crowd came as near the gallows as the soldiers would permit them, and a running fire of chaff and laughter hummed over Heavitree. Then the noise changed, and

from the outside of the mob ascended a steady and increasing roar of human voices.

The waiting party bestirred itself. The parson, in gown and bands, opened his book, and walked with a soldier on each side of him to meet the victims; Dr. Sparrow approached the executioner, and the latter, now busy with his ropes, grumbled aloud, in the hearing of the sheriff and governor.

"'T is a scandalous thing that you did not suffer me to do this in the new way," he said. "Surely, since the men must die, humanity directs their death should be as swift and painless as may be. The long drop kills in the fraction of a second. To turn them off, even as I tie the rope, means half a minute of suffocation at the least."

"What 's good enough for Jack Ketch should be good enough for you," replied Dr. Sparrow. Then he turned to the governor.

"This man has ideas!" he said. "A hangman with ideas — a humane hangman!"

What the other might have answered was lost in a thunder of sound. There were shouts and counter shouts. It appeared that a considerable faction of the crowd sympathized with the younger prisoner, though William Workman won nothing but hisses, hoots, and curses. He came to his end according to the traditions of his calling, jested with his guards, blew a kiss to a woman, and showed not one shadow of fear when the sinister tree loomed above him. But Godolphin, though calm and self-contained, indulged in no bravado or braggadocio. He sat on his coffin with his arms folded, and his eyes fixed upon the bottom of the car. So indifferent was he that some whispered he had been drugged, and was half asleep. He awoke, however, at

the storm of sound that burst and broke over Heavitree. He rose, steadied himself with the shoulder of the driver, and looked down at a great sea of faces, some sad for him, some mad for mere brute lust of the drama about to be played. The chaplain now headed the procession, and spoke from his book; but none could hear him. Once or twice the swaying crowd bent the line of the soldiers; but a prick or two from a bayonet made them give way, and the carts soon stood under the gallows. Side by side they were placed, and they had scarcely been drawn into position when a lithe, black figure leapt into the nearest, where stood Godolphin. The executioner's operations were performed with incredible rapidity, and hardly was the tail-board of the cart removed, and the irons taken off the prisoner, when he found himself pinioned from behind, the rope drawn close round his neck, and a small white bag pulled down over his face. A moment later, the other end of the rope was fast to a ring-bolt in the beam overhead, and the dark figure had leapt across to the second cart. Workman chaffed him, and bade him pull the noose tighter.

"I don't want to dance in the air longer than I can help, my fine blackbird," he said.

But the other did not answer until all was ready. Then he descended from the cart, and gave the signal. None present had ever seen an execution performed with such amazing celerity. There were cries of disappointment from some, of admiration from others more humane. The officials were well satisfied, and the governor spoke to Fenford.

"You are to be commended, Fenford," said he. "I will see that you are favourably reported."

A carpenter, who had helped the executioner on the

day after his arrival, expressed admiration to his fellow-workers.

"He ain't a talker, but, my word! he can do his work!" he said.

The grim tragedy was swiftly over. The two sufferers writhed and twisted; then one was still, and soon after, the other hung lifeless. Dr. Sparrow came forward, and at his nod the executioner, who was now on the beam above, lowered the bodies one by one. The limp things were carried, head and heels, to the coffins, and deposited therein; the executioner carefully drew his ropes from their necks, and the white caps from their faces. He looked into the quiet countenances of the dead, and was apparently satisfied. The crowd shouted and surged and struggled forward, to get a peep at the corpses if possible. But the soldiers kept them back.

Then the troops formed up; the coffins were put together into one cart; and Dr. Sparrow, carefully guarded against the mob, rode with them back to the prison.

The officials departed, and the hangman, donning a heavy coat, which concealed his person, waited with a guard of soldiers until the mob should disperse. He still grumbled; but an official or two, who spoke with him, assured the idealist that no such swift and merciful execution had ever before been seen in the West Country.

"Jack Ketch is a bungler to you," they told him.

Meantime, the mob had fought its way to the place of execution, crowded round it, and carried away scraps and fragments, as precious mementoes of the event. The carpenters were already demolishing the gallows.

Gradually the people thinned away; but much excitement still ran like a tide through the citizens of the ever faithful city, and when night came there was brawling in many quarters. Meddlicott, the foreman of the jury that brought Godolphin in guilty, had his windows broken, and just such a wave of feeling as Trinny had prophesied, broke loose. But it was too late to save the dead, and large, senseless crowds amused themselves, therefore, by harassing the living, to the best of their power. Even the executioner received a visit, for certain youths had tracked his hackney coach back to the lodging beside the river; but they were too late, and the landlady, amazed to hear the business of her visitor, appeared at the first summons, to inform them that Mr. Fenford was already departed.

Elsewhere, toward evening, in a shed within the prison precincts, there followed the second act of the drama, and the city coroner, with his jury, sat on the corpses, and learned that they had been well and truly hanged. A few of the company peeped into the black coffins, and gazed at the dead, then Dr. Sparrow explained the satisfactory nature of the execution, and the rite concluded.

In the ordinary course, graves dug within the prison would have swallowed Godolphin and Workman; but on this occasion the law willed otherwise. Christian burial was denied the highwaymen, and already on the hill called 'Gibbet'—a round eminence in the west of Dartmoor Forest, nigh Black Down—there had arisen two tall poles, with transverse beam, from which hung iron cages. A farrier of Mary Tavy had made them, and they swung from chains, awaiting their burdens.

Therefore, at fall of night, followed another scene in

this eventful chapter of two careers. There drew up at a postern gate in the prison wall a large, covered miller's waggon, hired for the purpose; and into it were lifted the coffins. Straw was strewn within the interior of the vehicle; a local man drove it and beside him sat an armed soldier, while two more occupied a seat at the back of the waggon. Three horses, harnessed abreast, drew it, and a great lantern shone on either side.

Another crowd had collected to see this departure, but precautions were taken, and a force of soldiery marched on either side of the waggon until it cleared the mob and was well upon its way. There they left it, and the lumbering thing, with white tilt and black horses, increased its speed, and vanished into the night. Sitting on the lowered tail-board, with their legs hanging out behind, the soldiers talked, smoked, and discussed the tragedy of the day. They were divided, for one held that Godolphin had suffered justly, while the other thought that the young man's life was too heavy a price to pay for his folly. In front of the cart there was no argument. The corporal and the miller's son, who drove, were talking about seed corn.

So they passed through the darkness, until they came to Whiddon Down, an open common lying on high land some miles from Okehampton.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A HUNCHBACK RIDES WITH THE DEAD AND TERRIFIES THE LIVING

BY the time that the great van, with its white tilt gleaming through the night, had proceeded upon Whiddon Down and was half-way across it, only the driver of the three horses could have been called really awake. The soldier beside him, having exhausted the subject of corn, had rested against his shoulder, and was snoring; the two red-coats, behind, were similarly supporting each other, and both nodded on the brink of sleep. The night was dark, and the hour had come when nature stood at her lowest ebb of vitality. There was no sound but the corporal's snoring, the grinding of the heavy waggon wheels, and the steady tramp of the horses. Two great fans of light swept forward on either side of the funeral coach, and showed the confines of a level heath, through which the white road ran. It also revealed a steam that rose off the horses. In a faint golden mist it ascended upon the darkness, and vanished.

Then, between the hours of three and four o'clock, the waggon overtook a man walking along the road. He was deformed, for a hump rose on his back, and he crawled along very slowly. He had seen the approaching vehicle some time before it reached him, and now lifted up his voice and spoke.

"For charity, neighbours, let an old man have a lift.

I 'm cruel weary and footsore, and I 'm feeble and sick. For God's sake let me ride a little way, and give my bones a rest."

The driver looked down, and saw a grey-bearded tramp. He was dressed in rags, and carried a basket on his back and a tall stick in his hand.

" You can ride, if these here soldiers have no objection," said the man with the reins. " But I 'm in their hands."

" For the love of the Lord, kind men, don't forbid it," whined the wanderer. " I 'd not ask, but I 'm in terrible pain, with a raw foot. I 'm bound for Okehampton, and you 'll be doing a fellow-creature a mighty good turn if so be you 'll ease me on my journey, if it 's only a mile or two."

" We go through Okehampton," answered the corporal, on the box-seat. He yawned, and came to his senses gradually. The other soldiers had dismounted to stretch their legs, and light their pipes. They examined the night-foundered wretch, and laughed. Then the waggoner whispered to their leader.

" Let 's have a lark! Lord, He knows we have n't had much fun since we started. Suffer the old creature to get in, and nose down in the straw, and see what he 'll make of his companions! 'T will frighten him into a fit, without a doubt, and give us something to laugh at."

Apparently, the corporal shared the other's sense of humour. Indeed, he enjoyed the idea, and was content to put it into practice.

" Trust you yokels for a joke!" he said, then turned to the aged man in the road.

" Get in, if you will. It seems our lot, to-night, to do naught but pick up tramps and wanderers. There 's

two more in the waggon, and they 're sleeping like dead men — after a busy day, seemingly. Mind you don't wake 'em, gaffer!"

"Heaven will reward you, Captain, have no fear of that," said the tramp. Then he cast away the hedge-stick that he had carried to help his injured feet, and climbed feebly into the cart. A man lent him a hand, and he was soon upon the straw. Then the tarpaulins were drawn round him, the soldiers took up their place at the back of the cart, and the horses proceeded. The four responsible for the waggon were all wide awake again now, and they listened eagerly to learn the effect of their rough practical joke. Nor had they very long to wait. For two or three minutes they heard the old man groaning and sighing, as he turned his weary limbs, and sought for a comfortable resting-place in the straw. Silence followed, and then a sudden yell of frantic horror made the horses start.

"Stop! Stop! For God's sake let me out! They 're dead men — they 're clay-cold corpses!" screamed the traveller.

Before the laughing soldiers could stop him, the terrified creature had torn aside the tarpaulin at the back of the cart, thrust between the red-coats, and leapt out into the road. They caught one glimpse of a bald head, a pair of terrified eyes, a flying grey beard, and a shoulder with a great hump thereon; then the poor tatterdemalion, who had leapt from the moving vehicle, fell in the road, and rolled over in the dust.

All was dark behind the waggon, and the old man vanished instantly; but they could still hear him screaming, "Clay-cold corpses! Clay-cold corpses!" and their delight knew no bounds. They laughed themselves warm;

then a soldier looked into the waggon, struck flint and steel, and saw the two black boxes with a white face staring up from each. He left them quickly enough, and none was sorry when far in their rear, upon the eastern sky, as they approached the hill into Okehampton, there glimmered a dim white streak of light at earth level. The dawn was tardy, but it came at last, and by the time that they had reached the little market town in the valley beneath, there was light sufficient to whiten the faces of the sleeping houses, and touch the golden figures of the clock in the squat church tower.

And then, as they drew up a moment at an open fountain to let the horses drink, and descended to the ground, those who had inflicted such a brutal fright on a way-worn wanderer were themselves terrified by an amazing sound from within the waggon.

The men turned white, and the extent of their physical courage was manifested by their behaviour. The soldiers from the rear promptly fled to the corner of the street, and there stood to wait events. The corporal, who was a Roman Catholic, crossed himself, but also took care to put some distance between his person and the waggon. The driver also appeared to show terror, but he acted bravely, and did not budge from his place at the horses' heads, beside the water-trough.

From within the vehicle there had come the deep, muffled voice of a man. Surely no spirit ever spoke so; yet whence the voice proceeded were only corpses.

But the words uttered were of no alarming character. Something moved within the waggon, and the front tarpaulin was shaken.

"Where be we got to, lads? Lord! what a blessed sleep I've had; but my bones are that stiff I can't

crawl. If 'tis Okehampton, you 'll have to lift me down."

The tarpaulin was pulled aside, and the bearded face of the hump-backed beggar appeared. He blinked his eyes, stared round him, and cried —

"Okehampton, sure enough!"

Then, while the soldiers returned, and glared at the old man as at something supernatural, he lifted his maimed foot over the front of the waggon and, with many groans, called to them to help him down. In the dim light he presented a woful spectacle, and when a red-coat had assisted him to reach the ground he crawled to the step of a door, and sat upon it.

They hailed questions upon him, but he stared, and could not answer them.

"Dead men? Coffins? Good powers! what are you talkin' about? I did n't see no dead men, nor yet coffins. I dropped in the straw like a thing half dead myself, as I was. If there 'd been twenty dead folk they would n't have kept me awake. Oh, my poor foot! The doctor 'll have to chop it off for sartain!"

He nursed his right leg, the foot of which was tied up in a filthy bandage, and then he began lamenting his stick.

"I throwed un away, and now I shall want un," he whined.

Getting nothing from this wreck of a man, those responsible for the burden of the waggon threw open the tarpaulins and looked inside. But the driver would not leave his horses, and still stood at their heads.

A little later he shouted to the soldiers, but their ears were stopped, for they stood face to face with an empty coffin. Side by side in the straw the two boxes

lay, and one was full, but the former occupant of the other had vanished. William Workman slept his last sleep peacefully enough, and ironical indifference still haunted his mouth; but Felix Godolphin had disappeared. Again the men of war fell to trembling, for here, in their belief, was a miracle. They did not immediately realize the extraordinary nature of the thing that had been done. For many seconds they held their lantern overhead, and glared like soldiers turned to stone, then the noise made by the driver of the waggon, who had been shouting incessantly, came to their understanding, and they leapt out to learn what he wanted.

"You fools, you dolts!" he yelled, pointing up a narrow alleyway that led from the main street of the town. "Why did n't you come forth when you heard me hollering? The beggar, that old bag of bones you left on the doorstep yonder — He 's gone — he 's off! The moment you climbed into the waggon he was on his feet and away, like the wind. I never seed a man, young or old, run so fast in my born days. That way he went, but you may as well chase a kris-hawk as him. He 's half a mile away by now."

They stood bewildered, and one ran up the alley for a hundred yards, but a dozen little ways broke out of it, and the hunchback might have been safely hid in one of half a hundred silent cottages. He was clean gone, and had there been fifty soldiers instead of three, he was safe from them.

Then thunder of hoofs broke out of the morning, and a few moments later, while the guardians of the waggon still stood in some doubt of their next action, two mounted men, in uniform, galloped down the hill that they had just descended, and drew up beside them. The horses

stretched their legs, put down their heads, and steamed; one poor beast, badly over-ridden, sank upon its side a few moments after its rider dismounted, rolled over, and expired.

From Exeter the men were come, and their mission was to overtake the waggon at all cost before any assault should be made upon it. They brought a startling story with them, and cursed very heartily to find that they were come too late.

There had risen a strange rumour upon the prison, after midnight, and the hangman was reported to have called on the governor with some amazing tale, of which the riders had no time to learn particulars. All that they could say was that they had been dispatched to gallop post-haste after the waggon, overtake it as swiftly as possible and ascertain if the dead men were in their coffins, and all was well with the guard. They were then to return as swiftly as they could to Exeter.

The riders delayed as short a time as possible and, knocking up the *White Hart Inn*, soon procured a pair of fresh mounts, and set off on their return journey. As for the guardians of the waggon, in sore trepidation they went on their way through Okehampton and Sourton, and above Bridestowe to Gibbet Hill. Their concern was great, and still they knew not how to explain the mystery; but one thing seemed clear enough: Felix Godolphin lived, and when the old man cried out with horror at his company, it was not he, but one of the occupants of a coffin who had leapt from the cart and vanished into the night. The newcomer had furnished him with a disguise and taken his place for a time; and then, before reaching Okehampton, had donned his own disguise again — a fancy dress quite capable

of hoodwinking the party under the first dim light of day.

Only the waggon driver was now indifferent, for the responsibility rested not with him. But the rest took a very gloomy view of their position, and a woful silence overtook all three as they proceeded to Gibbet Hill. They blamed the young miller sharply for suffering their passenger to run away, whereon he retorted, with some heat, that he had called their attention to the fact, but was not going to leave his father's horses for any man. As for the rest, they must pay the reckoning, since it was no affair of his. They fell to quarrelling presently, and each threw the blame upon the others. They were indeed still exchanging angry words, when a horseman overtook them. He was clad in pink, and appeared to be riding to hounds.

It was Mr. Trueman Trinny, on his famous bright bay, and he slowed down at sight of the soldiers, and showed some interest.

"I 'll wager now," he said, "you 'll be taking those blackguards, who were hanged at Exeter yesterday, to Gibbet Hill."

"That 's our business," said the corporal, in a surly tone, for the story of the night would fly afield quickly enough without his telling.

"Ah! I thought it was," answered the innkeeper, unabashed. "You must know that the event has made the deuce and all of a stir in these parts; because we moor folk don't get much excitement, and a job like this has quite turned our heads. You 'll find a brave lot of people on Gibbet Hill to welcome you, I 'll wager. Did they die game?"

"Whether they died game or not, don't matter,"

answered the corporal. "We ain't here to talk about it. You 'll see it all in the papers, no doubt."

"Poor chaps! I knew Mr. Godolphin. He was a gentleman, but he had wrong opinions," replied Trueman. "No doubt those highway robbers drew him in. 'T was too heavy a punishment, in my opinion."

"What d'you know about him?" asked the driver; but Trinny answered nothing of a definite nature.

"He 's got a hero of a father, and a brave sister. 'T will break their hearts without a doubt."

He asked to see the dead presently; but he was refused; then, where a lane broke from the high-road and led into the Moor, he took his leave.

"Cheero!" he said. "No doubt I shall see both poor fellows swinging over my head some day soon. Perhaps the fox will bring us to Gibbet Hill presently. And you 'll be glad to have your painful day's work done. It must have been a pretty grim task bringing these famous corpses along all night. 'T would have made my flesh creep, I 'm sure, and I could n't have done it without a barrel of liquor to keep my pluck up. But no doubt you brave soldiers would n't be afeared of anything on two legs, much less the poor dust you carry. You take my advice, and have four fingers of brandy apiece when you get to the *Goat and Compasses* — a mile further on — for you 're a hang-dog looking trio, and want a drop of honest drink."

He rode away, and left the soldiers sulky and ill at ease. But they carried out their orders to the best of their powers, and when Gibbet Hill was reached, and a small crowd of local men, with a sportsman or two on horseback, came about them, they dragged forth the corpse of Will Workman, lifted it into the iron cage

prepared for it and, when questioned concerning the other culprit, refused to reply.

They were soon on their return journey; while behind them, fascinated by the barbarous spectacle, stood full two hundred men gazing at the suspended clay of one who, but a few short weeks before, had struck terror into their hearts and made them fear the sound of their own voices.

They cackled together, made feeble jests, and reminded one of a dozen barnyard fowls collected about a dead hawk.

CHAPTER XXIX

MR. TRINNY EASES A FATHER'S HEART AND UNFOLDS A MARVELLOUS TALE

TRUEMAN TRINNY had no appointment with the hounds, as may be supposed, and it is certain that he would not have kept it in any case. He was a man with a heart as well as a head, and while he had used his brains to good purpose of late, it was a spirit of sympathy and compassion that now called him where two men and a woman waited in profound anxiety to learn what he had to tell.

The Moor was an open book to him, and though many a good mile and many a rough road extended between him and his own quarters, he took the best route, and set out swiftly. He talked to his horse, to prevent himself from falling asleep, for the innkeeper had been awake, and hard at work, for forty-eight hours, and his nature, tough though it was, craved mightily for rest. He was not done yet, however. He galloped when possible, and held a course that brought him on to the high-road, not far from Great Mis Tor. Then he proceeded swiftly to Two Bridges, doffed his pink, drank a bottle of port out of a tumbler, and proceeded.

Not a word could any get from him at home. Even to his wife he had nothing to say. But she understood, and held his silence hopeful, and his haste to be at Prince Hall a sure sign that all was well.

Down the avenue of beeches Trinny went, and at the end of it found waiting those to whom he had come. A pathetic group welcomed him, for the clergyman supported Sir Archer on one side, and Miranda upon the other. For long he had waited, praying for news, while his brother and daughter sought to comfort and sustain him.

To them came Trinny, and they heard his familiar "Cheero!" while he was yet a hundred yards distant. The strain gave at that salute, and Trueman found his hearers in a mood emotional when he came among them.

They were within doors very soon, with Trinny at the centre of the group.

"In a word," he said; "all is well. I have seen Master Felix this day and, though he can't be called at his fighting best, there 's nothing the matter that won't come right. Dame Parlby will look to that. She has him under lock and key, and he 'll soon be his own man again — ab-so-lutely — though if he suffers from a stiff neck for the rest of his born days none can be astonished."

He looked round him. Three pair of eyes were fastened on his face.

"Walls have ears, Sir Archer. Am I safe to speak?" Miranda answered.

"Safe indeed, Mr. Trinny. There are none here but would bless the ground you walked on. I envy you to be the bearer of such news."

"You must drink — you must drink, Trinny," said Sir Archer. "We need not trouble Silas Squibbs. You will fetch a decanter from the dining-room, brother. Mr. Trinny is a three-bottle man."

"Nay, nay, Sir Archer. But these be thirsty times,

no doubt, and I cannot refuse a glass of wine to go along with my story."

The clergyman returned with a full decanter, and Trueman soon set out on his narrative.

"Miss Miranda here, will have told you that we got to the hangman and heard his secrets, and that she explained them to your son when taking her last farewell. He learned his part exactly, and performed it to the letter. But what she did not tell you, because she did not know it, is that, though Lot Fenford — deputy for Jack Ketch — explained to me how it was possible — a doctor helping — to save a condemned man on the gallows, nevertheless Fenford refused to do any such thing Ab-so-lutely refused. I 've got a long tongue, as you know, Sir Archer, the Lord forgive me; and I can generally, with time and patience and a bottle of the best, get a man round to my way of thinking; but time was short, with Fenford, and patience was wasted, and a bottle of the best was no good at all. He only drank beer, and mighty little of that. So there it was: this amazing man — common hangman you never could call him, for he was the most uncommon chap that ever walked the earth in any calling — this Fenford would n't help me, not for ten, twenty, thirty thousand pound! He was a man without a price — a rare bird — though I 've known one or two like him before, and also a woman here and there. 'T was the last thing I 'd expected, for when the prison doctor was bought by Captain Burgoyne — Captain I call him, for a captain of men he is — when, I say, he 'd won over the doctor to do his part, of course I reckoned the hangman would very quickly follow after. However, he was stubborn as my cart-mare. I could n't budge him, and the tongues of angels would n't have done it, nor

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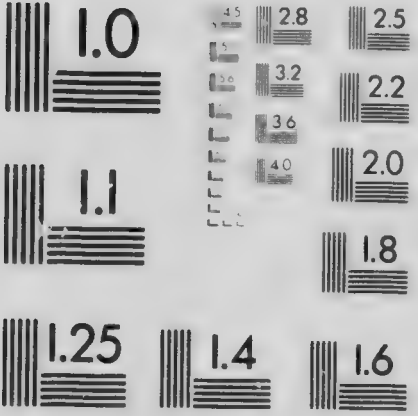

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yet all the money in the Duchy. So away I went, with my tail between my legs, I warrant, and took my story to Burgoyne. Then I soon found the stuff he was made of at a pinch. I told him everything, and how the trick might be done; 'But,' I said, 'after all my care for the details, I don't know that 't is much use our knowing how not to hang Master Felix, seeing that we have n't got the job.'"

Mr. Trinny filled his glass.

"Cheero, gentlemen!" said he. He nodded at the wine. "Pretty drinking — pretty drinking — and I wish you 'd join me, Sir Archer, and your reverence, for both of you look to my eye ——" But the old soldier was trembling and could ill bear this diversion.

Miranda whispered to Trueman to proceed, and he did so.

"When I said that it was n't our work to hang the sentenced men, the Captain flashed off one of those looks, like a gun firing, and I saw a set of his jaw that I 'd never marked before. My word, he 's a man! 'It 's going to be our work!' he said. 'There 's no other way. If Fenford can't be bought, then 't is very clear to me, Mr. Trinny, that we can't trust him with this bit of work. In a word, we know now how to manage the rope so that Godolphin can hang on it without being hanged. That 's all that matters. Fenford must be out of harm's way to-night. That done, I see the rest!'

"In an hour," continued Trueman, "we were at the hangman's again, and sent up a message that he was wanted at the gaol by the governor. It was dark in the hackney cab that he brought, and the lad had no occasion to feel suspicious. So down he came, and into the cab he got. In five minutes we had him bound hand

and foot, and gagged into the bargain. The coachman is the richer by five hundred pounds, and earned it, for you 'll guess we had little enough time to find a safe prison for Master Fenford till all was over. We drove out of Exeter to a pig butcher — the brother of our driver, who lives along with his pigs in a den across the river down in Exe marshes. And this man made no fuss, but fell in with his brother's suggestion, and the price named — five hundred for him too. Lord! the money 's been flying, I warn you.

" So there was the hangman safe as houses, and since we blindfolded him, he 'll never know who 't was played such a prank. He must have got loose a thought too soon in the upshot, as I found out only a few hours ago, before I left Okehampton, and if there 's treachery Mr. Pig-sticker will be in trouble; but the hangman was n't set free soon enough to spoil sport, or very like I should n't be here now."

He sipped his wine, and went on.

" Well, there it was, and the next thing the Captain had to do was to find a hangman. But he 'd found one! ' I 'll trust that work to none but myself,' he said. ' One man in his time plays many parts, Trinny. And there 's no offence in it, and if there was, when I think of somebody ——' In a word he had resolved to take Fenford's place himself; and he did take it. From that hour he was Fenford. He went back to the lodging, and I explained his absence at our inn. At the lodging, of course, nobody knew who Fenford was, and Burgoyne merely told the landlady that he 'd come instead of the other man. He paid her, and she was indifferent. Next morning he went to the place of execution, and always drove, and always wore the black and the mask, while he saw

everything was as it should be there. None ever beheld his face, and few heard his voice. I saw the execution, and got to the doctor soon after they took him down, and heard that Master Felix was alive, and would come through. But of course Captain Burgoyne would n't play any tricks with Will Workman. He had to die anyway; I 've no doubt he was hanged as well and kindly as it could be done. For a greater lover of mercy don't live.

" There he stood among them all, with the nerve of a regiment of soldiers! He rubbed shoulders with the sheriff and the governor and the chaplain, and a good few others, and he worked that lightning quick that many old hands at hangings, who were well able to judge — regular ' fanciers ' you might call 'em — all swore they 'd never seen an execution done half so well — not by Ketch himself.

" So there it was, and before you could tell your prayers the mob was roaring and crying out against the sentence — a fickle, uncertain thing is a mob — and the officials with the soldiers was getting away, and the hanged men in their coffins were carted off. Then Cap'n Burgoyne put Fenford's ropes and straps carefully back in his bag, got in a hackney coach — our friend's again — and was drove quickly away to his lodgings. He squared all there, left the hangman's kit, and came back to our inn nigh the prison. 'T was all finished before the city had done shouting.

" Soon after midday I was off to play my part, and Captain Burgoyne along with me. But we did n't go till Sparrow — the prison doctor — had seen us, and told us that Master Felix went on all right in an outhouse along with his dead companion.

" Then came the inquest, and I may mention that the

coroner 's got ten thousand pounds for his day's work, for he knew all about it, though of course he 'll be able to say he did not. When the news reached us that the inquest had gone off without trouble we set out, and the next part of the tale happens a bit nearer home.

" He forgot nothing, but, my faith! there was a lot to remember. And how it will go one can't exactly say, till we hear if the pig-sticker that hid Fenford has got into trouble. However, that 's to come. We had a pair of horses from Okehampton brought up overnight and on them we started at eve, while a third hoss brought our little baggage with us. 'T was our friend, the hackney coachman, rode that. By eight of the clock we were at Dame Primrose Parlby's, and by nine we had set out in her old chariot for Whiddon Down. But now 't was my turn to take a hand, and when I got in the carriage, you 'd never have thought 't was Trueman Trinny, I 'm quite sartain.

" You see, what we had to do was to clear Master Felix of the death waggon before it reached its destination, and I backed myself to have a lift for naught, change places with the living man, and take his place beside the dead one. The darkness made it possible, and when an old, crooked-back tramp begged the soldiers for pity's sake to give him a lift, they raised no objections, but thought they 'd have a bit o' fun. 'T was just what I meant to give 'em!

" I 'd drove up, disguised of course, left the Parlby chariot hidden at a cross-road on the heath, and limped out when I saw the white tilt of the death coach coming along.

" In I went, and the live man in his coffin was ready for me. I gave him a dram, that he needed by that time,

dragged out a false beard and wig for him, stuck a gert lump of straw under his jacket for a hump, and gave him my ragged coat, for I wore two. Then I shouted blue murder, and out jumped Master Felix and fell in the road, and then made off in the darkness. 'T was all done so lightning quick, and the night was so dark, that none smelt any trick; but I thought that they might very likely look inside after such a fuss, and so I got in the empty coffin myself, half hid in the straw, and took off my hat and beard and lay there beside the dead highwayman — as still as he was. And sure enough, they did look in, and held a lantern over us for a moment, but only to see all quiet as the grave, and two dim faces peering up at 'em. So I was left in peace, and, so dead weary was I, that but for the risk of spoiling all, I 'd have gone to sleep gladly enough. But I knew that if I did so there 'd be trouble for me when they came to Gibbet Hill and woke me up again. Therefore I kept my weather eye lifting, and was all ready for the next scene when we got to the village, and my time came for bidding the soldiers good-bye."

Mr. Trinny then described the events at Okehampton, and told how, when the baffled military leapt into the cart, he had fled the instant their backs were turned.

"The miller's son, who drove, was on our side, I must tell you," he added, "for 't was necessary that we had somebody that we could count on to pick me up, and if the soldiers had refused, 't other man would have claimed knowledge of me, and agreed to pick me up. But as it fell out they were all willing enough, though the driver played his part right well, I promise you. So I had a bit of start before he gave the alarm, and was well away to the river, when they jumped down from the cart.

"To Okement Glen I went, and there had got the others before me, for Master Felix, when he hasted from the waggon, went straight to the chariot, hid not a quarter of a mile distant. And there was Captain Burgoyne, and one of the dame's men, ready to succour him. He lies hid at Okehampton till to-night; and more about him I 'm not going to tell in this company, for there 'll be a mighty hue and cry for the lad, and the less that 's known at Prince Hall, the better for all parties.

"As for me, I made a tidy breakfast with the others, and then, after I 'd seen my beard and rags in a bonfire, got in my pink, that was sent over yesterday along with my horse, and rode gaily forth to overtake the waggon. But somebody else had overtaken it before I did, and at Okehampton I heard how two more red-coats had arrived with unknown news, and got mounts at the *White Hart,* and returned to Exeter. The three soldiers with the waggon would n't tell me much, nor did they know much, I fancy; but it is clear enough the mystery 's out, and I must have bade 'em good-bye at Okehampton, just in time. All then that matters for the minute is that your lad is safe and well, and that Captain Burgoyne is also safe and well. I 'd trust that man with my Amelia Ann; and words can't go further! And now I must get home to her, and find out how the land lies, and who 's wanted and who is not. Fenford 's going to get a bit of his own back if he can. But the question is, can he? I hope he can't."

Mr. Trinny rose stiffly, and the others rose with him. Sir Archer took his hand, and held it while he spoke.

"Words are idle things at such a moment, Trueman; but you are a father, and you are a man of genius and vivid imagination. You will guess without my telling

you how I have suffered, and how my brother and my girl have suffered. Yet what can we do but thank you?"

"There 's no cause for any such thing, Sir Archer — no cause at all. I 've had the venture of my life, and I 'm right well paid by the sport of it, as any sportsman would be. But your thanks are due to Captain Robert Burgoyne, for 't is he, under heaven, has saved your son's life. He has done a miracle, and that 's the word for it, and when the chance comes — which may not be yet awhile — 't is him you 'll have to thank. A man in a thousand — a marvel! It makes me mad to think he 's not an Englishman; and yet not that neither, for t' would be a dog-in-the-manger deed for us in this great country to grudge the man to his own land. I lay we have a few as good; but I swear we have none better."

It was now Miranda's turn, and her heart leapt at this generous praise. She could not speak, and moved away to hide her tears; but the old soldier himself made answer.

"He shall not find me lacking in gratitude, my friend. He shall have his heart's desire of me, and I only wish that it were in the power of an old and broken man to reward the young hero as he deserves to be rewarded. But that is impossible. I have nothing for him but a father's blessing."

Trueman smiled to himself, for he was familiar by now with the American's ambition.

"You 'll not give him anything on earth that he wants more than that, Sir Archer. He met you at Prince Town, when the bishop came, and I 've heard him say that if you could see the way to be a second father to him, his cup of happiness would brim over. And since he 's preserved you a son, the least you can do is to give him a

father. Remember that! Take care of yourself, Sir Archer, and go home and drink a bottle of that fine port you gave me. Have no fear for the gout. My news will put that to flight quicker than physic. Cheero, Sir Archer, cheero!"

Away he rode, and the knight returned to his brother and his child.

"You find me weeping, Archer — I confess it — indeed it would be vain to deny it," said the Reverend Septimus. "It is not manly — it is not becoming, and it is not at all a pleasant sensation. But there are times when even an old man's painful tears must fall, and this is one of them. They are tears of humble gratitude and joy; they are tears of thanksgiving to One who has sought what was lost in the wilderness, and answered many a vigil of prayer. Our boy is saved, and be very sure that he was not saved for naught. We have faith in his Saviour, and well we know that he has been gathered as a brand from the burning for his Master's own high purpose."

CHAPTER XXX

WHEREIN THE PEACE IS RATIFIED

SUCH a man-hunt as Devonshire had not known was made for Felix Godolphin. The country rang with the scandal of the escape, but while not a few were troubled that the authorities failed in their pursuit, many of those whose imagination had enabled them to picture his father's sufferings expressed very hearty satisfaction that the son had got off with his life. The law, however, has no sense of fitness or decency. The law is not a gentleman, and its practice is prone to deteriorate the man who devotes his life to it. It tends to develop all that is greedy and grasping, petty and mean in the soul. The law saw every reason why Sir Archer Godolphin himself should be approached on the subject of his son. It submitted the old man to an indecent inquisition and he, schooled now to a patience that he had never known, endured the base inquiry, and answered every question faithfully, as the law knew he would. The event proved that Trinny had done wisely to keep the secret of Godolphin's hiding-place, though the pettifogging spirits sent to examine Sir Archer, judging others by themselves, refused to believe his assurances that he knew not where his son was concealed. The law searched Prince Hall from attic to cellar, and it also made a sudden descent upon the abode of Dame Primrose Parlby, and left no stone at Okement Glen unturned to come at the vanished

man. But such a visit had been anticipated, and both Godolphin and Burgoyne were far from Okehampton before the search-warrant was issued.

The man with whom Lot Fenford was entrusted had himself liberated the executioner. But owing to misunderstanding the outraged hangman was permitted to go on his way an hour or two sooner than the time arranged. Still blindfolded, Fenford had been brought after dark from his prison. Then his gaoler had unbound his eyes, mounted a pony, and galloped off, leaving Lot alone in Exe marshes. The man shouted aloud for help, and obtained it from those who overheard him; but he was powerless to identify his gaoler, since he had never beheld him, nor could he give more than a description of Mr. Trinny. Burgoyne he had only seen for a moment before the American overpowered him in the coach. He told his story to the governor of Exeter gaol, was astounded to learn that the execution had been duly carried out, but soon raised a far-reaching suspicion that this was not the case. Mounted men were therefore dispatched to overtake the waggon, but, as we know, they failed to do so before the successful completion of Trinny's plot.

And now Burgoyne was hid in one place, and Godolphin in another, until it should be possible to complete the plans that Felix had already made for himself. Deadly danger still hung in a heavy cloud over him; but Robert Burgoyne needed not to remain hidden much longer. Peace was at hand, and he employed his leisure in making himself better known to Miranda and her father. Because Sir Archer, when it was borne into his mind that he had literally to thank Burgoyne for his son's life, could hold out no longer. For the best of all

possible reasons had the young man broken prison, and the old soldier longed very heartily to meet him, and express the personal thanks and gratitude that filled his soul. He desired Robert Burgoyne to come and dwell at Prince Hall until the peace enabled him to return to his native land; but this the American refused to do. It was desirable that he should incur no risk of capture and take no step that might associate his name with the Godolphins, until he was a free man. Not a few — Commandant Short among the number — linked Burgoyne with the plot that saved Felix; but nothing could be advanced in proof of the suspicion, and even had proofs existed, Burgoyne had vanished, and none of his possible foes knew where he might be. In truth, he was near enough, and few days passed but Miranda saw him, and had speech with him, for Mr. Trinny it was who offered snug asylum to Burgoyne, and kept the secret of his presence so closely hid that none but ostler Jan French and Mrs. Amelia Ann knew of it. Benjamin Gun was similarly concealed at Bair Down, and by night master and man met, and planned the future. For themselves it was clear enough, but mighty difficulties still existed in the matter of Felix Godolphin, and the time was near when those difficulties would have to be met.

With some fear the truth had been imparted to Jacko Caunter, for that gentleman earned little trust from his fellow-men; but in this case the temptation to profit by the misfortunes of others did not offer to him. He had his own axe to grind in the sequel, and it so happened that a chance to reap his own advantage sharpened Jacko's wits to good purpose. He it was, indeed, who found a safe solution of the remaining problem, and when, in after time, all danger of speaking had ceased to exist, Jacko

was wont to brag of his achievements, and take all credit to himself for the entire series of incidents.

"'T is like one of them children's puzzles," he said, long afterwards, to Mr. Trinny; "everything hinged on me — all my work, you may say; and it wanted a man of pretty high pluck and courage to carry it out all single-handed."

"How 's that then, Jacko? I thought I 'd done my share of the job," quoth Trueman, winking at the company.

But the other denied this.

"Not a bit of it. You was only a little wheel in the machine. 'T was I that was the main spring. For if I had n't tackled Blackadder single-handed, and taken his life, as we all know I did do, and Gun, the Yankee, bore testimony — if I had n't done that, then the others, as they rode off, would n't have been so excited as to show themselves to you, and let you hunt 'em down, and take 'em when the night came. And if that had n't happened they would n't have had to be hanged, and if they had n't had to be hanged you could n't have saved Felix Godolphin from his life of crime. Then I come in again, when no man knows how to get Godolphin safely off. 'T was my work, you must allow."

"So 't was then," admitted Trinny, "you did it all, Jacko, and we were just the puppets who danced while you pulled the strings."

For a month Godolphin hid on the Moor, as being the safest place. He knew the spot of old, a haunt of his dead friends; and here, in an ancient shepherd's cot, attended by night from Prince Hall, he made shift to live. Here it was, also, that he saw his father for the last time, because the old man rode thither after dark

to visit his son. Forgiveness on one side and contrition on the other, marked the meeting, and when they parted Felix Godolphin guessed that he would see the other's face no more.

With peace the situation was changed, for then Robert Burgoyne openly accepted the hospitality of Prince Hall, and Godolphin, unknown to any but Mr. Trinny and his wife, occupied Burgoyne's secret hiding-place at the *Ring o' Bells*.

It was on a night after he had been a week with the Godolphins that Burgoyne asked for the hand of his betrothed from her father. The blow was tempered; indeed it had already fallen, because so soon as he perceived that it must fall, Septimus Godolphin had broken its impact and warned his brother that Miranda loved the saviour of her brother.

"For her he did it — 't is her work, and by the magic of love, that Felix lives to-day. You will have guessed it, for you are lightning quick to read character, and this man's ingenuous eyes speak a language that none can mistake."

Sir Archer bowed his head.

"I have guessed it," he admitted. "I have seen it — in the frank worship of the man, and the yearning tenderness of my maiden. Yearning tenderness for me, Seppy — tenderness and pity for her father — the tenderness of one who stands a-tiptoe to fly far — far from those who love her. It was inevitable, as you say. I knew that it must come, sooner or later. What I could not know was the manner of its coming. I did not guess that Heaven willed she was to be an American's wife. Six months ago the idea must have given me a fit of apoplexy, or acute gout at the least. Now it is otherwise

with me. I shall not refuse them. He is a brave man, a righteous man, a gentleman. That he is also an American cannot be accounted ill fortune. It means loss and sorrow for me, since my girl must go into the new world and I shall see her face but seldom; but it is a gain for everybody else. He has taken away, but he has also given. Had the problem been put before me, Septimus; had the Angel of the Lord approached me, and said, 'This man loves your daughter, and would wed her; he loves your son, and will save him. And if he saves your son, you must give him your daughter'—had I received such a proposition, how could I have decided otherwise?"

"Impossible," answered the clergyman, "for consider the nature of the thing that has been done. You have seen Felix and spoken with him. Through the salvation of his body is promised the salvation of his soul. The world will find plenty of precious work waiting for his hand to do. His Maker rejects him not, but permits him to atone. His sorrow was sublime; his ambition in this life is still to prove himself your son. And trust me—his ultimate reward he will win; and, please God, you will know it before you pass to your own. In Robert Burgoyne there appears for Felix a man of his own generation, who desires to become his brother, who has saved his life, and takes such a delicate and profound interest in it, as a man standing in such relations to Felix may henceforth be supposed to take. It is true that the future for the moment looks dark, and that our boy under no circumstances can face his fellow-man for these many days; but time will alter that situation; time, that softens all things, will temper the wind of human opinion, and mingle mercy with justice. Granted that justice has

been outraged, there is still the figure of Christ to summon. I conceive that presently——"

"Nay," answered the other. "That way there lies no hope. The law of the land cannot be tempered with mercy. There is none to do it. Only an Act of Parliament can pardon Felix. But leave that; I believe in my heart that his soul is saved. For the moment we are concerned with the man who saved his body. I esteem and admire Burgoyne. His ideals are lofty; his courage is of the grand manner. He reminds me much of myself at his age; and though my judgment was sounder, I had greater advantages and a nobler tradition upon which to support it. He belongs to a new world, and perforce embraces its opinions and hopes. Some of these opinions I lament; others I applaud. In any case, this man cannot go far wrong. He is religious and modest. Flatterers will not seduce him; sinners will not tempt him. The law I believe would hang him for what he did; but my conscience is clean in that matter. He played hangman to save a soul: we must always remember that. The occasion is probably unique in history. I have considered every incident of it. I regard him as a man of extraordinary bravery; and worship Miranda as I do, I do not hesitate to affirm that he is worthy of her. Burgoynes have already won some title to attention. There was John — General John Burgoyne — who defeated the Americans at Germantown. 'T is true, however, that he surrendered at Saratoga a year afterwards. But he wrote plays for the stage, so doubtless the man had a screw loose somewhere. His son yet lives, and has already done some service in the Peninsula."

In this mood was the old warrior when Robert Burgoyne came to beg for his pearl of price. It followed,

therefore, that the young man had a task less severe than he anticipated.

"I hardly dare to ask you, Sir Archer, for what began in mere joy and wild passion of love between us has now grown into a solemn and mighty bond. But the more I think on it, the more amazed am I at my own temerity in this matter. Well I know what your daughter is, and must ever be, to you. It seems beyond belief that a stranger from a far country should dare. . . . Yet I have wooed and won her."

"I know it Burgoyne; I know it. Such things cannot be hid. I have faced it these many days. Miranda would echo all you say, for she is a loving daughter. And who am I that I should come between you? What argument can I advance to separate you? Indeed, I have none. Once I must have prevented this; to-day I shall not. You abound in errors of opinion, Burgoyne; but on none of your errors is it possible for me to fasten as a reason why you should not wed my girl. You are a gentleman; you can give your wife such an establishment as falls to the lot of few Englishwomen. Your past is unsullied, and you are brave and honourable. I pray God that when Peace comes she will spread her wings over your country and mine, to fly no more away, for it would break my heart — old and tough as it is — did you and she ever find yourselves at difference in the vital matter of your mother-lands. But I refuse to consider the possibility. I have learned that there are good and great men in America; I have at length perceived that their attitude, if mistaken, was none the less based on high principles, and an acute if erroneous sense of justice and right. I give her — my Miranda — into your keeping, Burgoyne, as a sacred and unutterably precious

treasure. Use her well, set her first and highest. She has no peer. And since your place and your work in the world are far hence, that too I must endure. Be just, be patient, be considerate always. She is no tame doll, but a woman of character and ideas. She has her own views and ideals, and they are worthy of admiration in a woman. Has she not dwelt all her short days at my own right hand? Seek not to influence her; be sure on every possible occasion she will have sound reasons — founded on the traditions of her family — for all she may do, and all she may think. For the rest, I trust you, and did you know me better you would realize the immense compliment and distinguished honour that is conveyed in those words. But they apply to your record of courage, and warlike resource, combined with recent incidents, which have resulted in the salvation of my unhappy son. Such circumstances of the past and present leave me in no doubt that you are a man who, despite your youth, may most utterly be trusted to do what is honourable and right. I am well content that Miranda should be your wife. I only ask, since your immense wealth renders such a step easy, that she shall be permitted to come to England as often as conveniently may be, during the remainder of my life. You shall not refuse me that, Burgoyne — indeed, it would be in vain that you did so, for she will look to it that her father is not forgot."

Burgoyne, in response, made all promises that befitted the situation; and that night the betrothal was announced publicly.

It synchronised with the peace, for at last war was ended indeed, and peace established: the *Favourite* brought back the treaty signed at Ghent during the preceding December, duly ratified by the President of

the United States. Then did the chill mansions of the War Prison resound with cries of joy. But peace might by no means be made with the pestilence, and various distempers still decimated the great throngs pent up at Prince Town. By driblets the Americans returned to the ports, and set forth for home according to the limited facilities of transshipment. A scene of immense bustle prevailed at the prisons, for all were now technically free men, and many who would show that they were in a case to provide for themselves, received permission to depart. Jew pedlars and other merchants swarmed daily in the prison yards and brought old clothes, in which a great trade was done. Many Americans, who could not get passports, made their escape at this period, for the weary guards and turnkeys had relaxed their efforts, and looked forward to departing from the wilderness as eagerly as those they watched. Some bitter spirits murmured that government was itself responsible for this laxity, and Andy Midge spoke the opinion of many among his race when he said so.

"We see derned straight, though you lobsters and your lobster-keeper think we don't," said he. "You let us go — why? Because your press-gangs are hungering for sailors. You know we 'll drift to the sea, and you know your tigers are waiting to pounce and take us aboard your ships. But we with brains see through your tricks and we won't go till the cartels are ready to take us."

Andy was wrong, however. As soon as he might do so, Burgoyne became responsible both for him and Owen Seapach. Thus it came about that the four survivors of the *Vermont* met again, because Benjamin Gun was now also safe, and able to go at large. The two sailors were received at Prince Hall, for Burgoyne had declared his

determination that he and the survivors of the *Vermont* should all return to America together.

"The Cap'n and you will both take back fine wives," declared Andy, "but there ain't time for Seapach to fit hisself with such an article, while, as for me, no girl 's going to marry a doodle wi' a black nose and no eyebrows. I must go home to Vermont a single man, and wait till I can find a blind woman."

Days passed swiftly now, and each week saw the numbers lessening, for a stream of United States sailors, soldiers, merchant sailors, privateersmen, and negroes filtered slowly down to Plymouth and other ports. But a dark moment had yet to come, and a morning broke when the flags flew at half-mast on all the five great prisons, for there had fallen out a fatal panic and confusion — a sudden, mysterious alarm through the garrison. Soldiers and their officers lost their heads; prisoners behaved foolishly. A terrible collision resulted, and the guard opened fire into a crowd of innocent men. A full volley of musketry was discharged upon a terrified crowd by soldiers, as terrified as themselves, and the error resulted in cruel loss of life, and many dangerous wounds.

The event threw a shadow on the preparations now afoot for two weddings — the earliest celebrated in the church of St. Michael and All Angels.

CHAPTER XXXI

'THE ONLY PRETTY RING TIME'

IT was the season of advancing spring, and the heather already budded, while still the greater gorse flashed its fire beside the banks of Dart. A triumphant song of colour daily waxed over Dartmoor, and the rare, brief glory of the summer prepared to return.

To-day heat danced upon the Tors, and the heights were swept in a fine haze. The wind drove gentle blue shadows over the hills and valleys, but sharp definition lacked from earth; faint hazes spread over the Moor, and only the long roads ran and dipped, ascended and descended white and clear, straight and stern, until like white threads they vanished over some ridge or in some notch of the far horizon.

Spring made much beauty in the vale of Dart at Two Bridges, and the hills were robed in misty green all round about. The hay in Mr. Trinny's meadows already glimmered with flowers; the clump of beech trees had cast their amber leafcases, and was trembling with the golden-green flush of the young foliage. There were blue-bells in the woods and small, shy flowers blossomed beside every stream. But brighter raiment than any to be found on tree or by river's brink flaunted elsewhere, for two brides were tiring to the song of the grey-birds at Bair Down and Prince Hall. Miranda insisted that she and Cherry should together marry their sailors,

and Burgoyne was well pleased that it should be so. Nor were the remaining survivors of the *Vermont* omitted from a position of importance in the approaching ceremony.

"Dern it, Andy, but you shall be my best man, for all your black nose," declared Benjamin Gun, "and Seapach 's going for best man to the Captain. 'T is right and proper that Yankees should stand by Yankees at such a time."

It was understood publicly that Burgoyne and Gun would sail for their home together, and take their wives with them; while as for Andy and Owen Seapach they, at Burgoyne's wish, were also to make the homeward journey with their old friends. And now came the wedding day, and Sir Archer, with his daughter by his side, flashed past the *Ring o' Bells* and under the triumphal arch lifted before the door of that famous hostelry. But Mr. and Mrs. Trinny had already driven to Prince Town, that they might be present at the ceremony, and all agreed that Trueman's Lincoln Green coat, sprigged waistcoat, and hat of silver beaver were a sight for the Gods, while Mrs. Trinny shone in rich russet velvet, and wore two noble ostrich plumes in her bonnet.

The bride from Bair Down wore white, and on the arm of her father, in his Sunday black with a notable frill to his shirt, passed up the aisle to meet Miranda. The maidens took courage in each other's company; the fathers shook hands, for they knew each other well, though Sir Archer was only familiar with the brighter side of Jacko Caunter's character.

Then came the bridegrooms — a small man and a mighty one, exemplifying muscle and brain. But the genial Gun was in truth but little more powerful than

Page 100

"A dance reading package at the double wedding"

his master physically; for Burgoyne had immense strength in his well-moulded body — a fact that he had proved often enough of late.

The conspirators now breathed again, for none had been identified with Felix Godolphin's escape, and none but those involved were aware of the part taken by Trinny, by Burgoyne, by Miranda, and by Dame Primrose Parlby, in the rescue. Nor did the many it had been necessary to bribe, by hint or word betray them. Indeed, to do so had proved impossible, for neither Trinny nor Burgoyne ever declared his own name in the business.

Dr. Sparrow, the richer by fifty-two thousand pounds, went on his way indifferent to those who had furnished it. Deftly he had done his work, and he considered the money to be well earned. For the rest, the coroner and certain turnkeys, all heavily bribed, played their parts efficiently, while the driver of the waggon, the hackney coachman, and his brother, the pig-breeder of Exe Marshes, also won their rewards.

A most energetic search was maintained for the escaped man, and the event created far-reaching excitement. It was impossible for Godolphin to show a sign, and he continued to lie closely hidden at Trinny's, as Burgoyne had done before him.

Thus, for two old men, the ceremony at Prince Town was sadly clouded, because Sir Archer knew not where his son was hidden, and his brother was also kept in ignorance.

"It must be so," directed Burgoyne, "for they know not the meaning of evasion, and will lie to save no man. Let them learn the truth, and the first person who asks them to tell it again will hear it. For the present,

then, they must hear nothing; anon they shall hear all."

To the wedding also came many distant members of the family of Godolphin, together with Dame Primrose Parlby, who had taken a fancy to Burgoyne, and for whom he entertained hearty admiration. Indeed, a crowded church witnessed the dual nuptials. The Reverend Septimus performed the ceremony, and uttered an exhortation to the united couples when it was accomplished.

"In your persons," he said, "you men and you women stand before us as a symbol of that blessed union we must hope henceforth will ever bind our countries. As you shall be true — husbands to wives, and wives to husbands — so we pray that Britain will evermore be true to America, and America to England. May the peace of God shine like a kindly light in your homes and in your lives — to warm your hearts and guide your conduct; and may that same peace of God henceforward endure between the countries for which you stand, lift its radiance for ever, and shine as a steadfast rainbow, linking land to land. May the past sink into oblivion; may it be left in the memory of the Almighty, who forgets nothing, and will give to each of all the thousands who have suffered and who have perished, their just and eternal recompense. But for us, let these griefs of war be forgotten; let us look forward; let us hail peace and the Prince of Peace; let us strive, each according to the power that is in him, to seek peace and ensue it."

After the ceremony all parties returned to Prince Hall, where the family of the Godolphins alone made a considerable gathering. But many others also came, and since the four Americans insisted on biding together, a double wedding breakfast followed the double wedding,

and Jacko Caunter chuckled out of sight to reflect what a cheap matter had been his daughter's nuptials. But he was to make over five hundred pounds to Cherry on her wedding day, and a like sum had been promised to Mr. Gun by his former chief.

The talk ran that Benjamin intended to turn farmer in Vermont, and Jacko declared that some day, when he grew old and needed rest, he should make the journey to America and see the young couple in their home. He was absolutely indifferent to Charity's departure — a circumstance that surprised nobody — but that Mary Caunter could also regard her pending loss with composure puzzled her friends, until they learned the reason.

Knowing that his son was safe, Sir Archer strove to hide his unhappy heart and, aided by his brother, played the host to good purpose, and welcomed all who were pleased to come.

It was a princely meal, and perhaps none ate and drank to better purpose than Andy Midge and Owen Seapach.

"I reckoned to be hungry for six months at the least," declared Andy, "but this square feed have done a lot to help me forget the rations in No. 4. And we don't forget Ben's bride neither; for many and many a good apple and carrot and turnip, free gratis, hev she given us."

There were speeches after the banquet, and Mr. Trinny gave his celebrated toast of 'the ladies.'

At dusk all was over, and the bridal pairs had departed — Burgoyne and his lady to Dartmouth, there to await the vessel that would presently take them to America; and Benjamin and Cherry to Plymouth. There, it was understood, they were to spend a week, and anon join the vessel destined to carry the Burgoynes.

That night, when all was over, and every man had returned to his own house, Trueman Trinny spoke with Felix Godolphin in his secret retreat at the *Ring o' Bells*, and related the events of the day.

"I got a bit of the cake on the sly for luck," he said. "And Mrs. Burgoyne sent you a thousand messages, and her good man likewise. Your father bore himself well, and do look a sight better since he heard your strength was returning to you. And the Reverend Septimus shone, I do assure you, and gave 'em such advice as I could n't have believed possible for a bachelor man to give. Mighty suspicious, in my opinion! And Dame Parlby lies at Prince Hall to-night; but to-morrow night she has our best bedroom. 'T is plotted very neatly, and after midnight she means to have a talk with you. A wonderful woman is your aunt, and her part in the game was as clever as anything else; for if she 'd not won to the gaolers' ears your sister had never found the chance to speak with you and tell you how to save your neck."

"'T 's all such old history now," answered the young man. "From the time the cart moved from beneath my feet and I drew a mighty breath, and felt as though my head was being slowly dragged from my body, till I lost consciousness; from the waking in the coffin and my blood bounding with joy to know that I still lived; from the struggle to lie as a corpse, and the final thanksgiving when the coroner's jury had come and gone -- from all these incidents to the present time there seems to have passed a century. I am not the man that Burgoyne pretended to hang; I am not the man that neighboured with Blackadder and Workman; I am not the man my father thrust from his house. I am a new man, Trinny, a man hungering to be proved, to face life, justify existence, and

atone for the past of those other men — called Felix Godolphin, now dead. May they soon be forgiven and forgot."

"Have no fear, dear sir; you will do all that in fulness of time," answered Trueman. "A little patience, and your opportunities will come and a new day break. You have passed through dark places, and the knowledge gathered up in them will help to do its work and make you patient and far-seeing. Thank God it has not slain your hope and your trust, for without these the battle of life is doomed to be lost. Hope and trust are vital, for faith is necessary to man as air. Our objects of faith change and our centre of trust shifts; but faith remains — faith in something, or somebody — some human cause or some heavenly promise."

CHAPTER XXXII

THE 'SEA LION' SAILS AWAY

TIME passed, and on the day when his niece and her husband were to leave Dartmouth upon their voyage to the West, the Reverend Septimus Godolphin found his brother restless and full of thoughts. He bade him, therefore, mount his pony and ride afield through the joy of a sunny morning.

"It will distract our minds to go forth into the brightness of the day," he said. "Let us ride to Prince Town and look out upon the sea that will soon be bearing those so near our hearts. Mr. Trinny is to bring us news of the embarkation and setting forth."

The knight agreed.

"We must pass the time until we learn that all is well," he said. "The wind is fair, and the ship is well found. I feel no concern for them."

They rode presently through Two Bridges, spoke awhile with Mrs. Trinny, and then proceeded to the village on the hill. Already something of the subsequent stagnation hung over it, for the prisoners were gone, the guards departed; the mournful mansions of granite and iron had yielded up the living ghosts that haunted them, and stood empty, save for uncounted memories of suffering and sorrow. Already unforgetting Nature laboured to restore her primal harmonies in that place. The young green of the spring brushed each echoing

court; weeds and grasses sprang in niche and cranny; for life is ever in wait to assert itself, and now that the many feet had gone, the earth they trampled took heart and the seed germinated with none to stay it. Where the savage and stricken had plotted in dark corners; where strong men had wept in secret and in secret suffered; where the devout had prayed to God and the blasphemer cursed Him, now squeaked bats and rats. Decay and desolation claimed the corridors; the rain and the wind sweetened; the lightning struck; storm and tempest and unfettered forces of nature swept every vault and foul recess. The haunts of the pestilence were scoured by the west winds; the evil records, written on dark walls, were washed away. Secret graves came to light; signs of infamy rewarded the searchers, who penetrated these arcana of the vanished hordes; a spirit of misery untold dwelt, like a presence, within the mouldering mounds of granite; but anon this roof fell, that chamber was laid bare, the forces of the outer air laboured ceaselessly to strip and cleanse; the sky was priest, and its lustral waters washed away the foul plague spots. Tempest, frost, torrent, and the sweet light of summer suns all played their part, even as time, swiftly flying, dimmed the ghastly recollections of that chapter in the history of two nations and drew a gracious mist of years between human memory and the lurid chronicle.

"The War Prison has vanished; its story is told," said Sir Archer, as he and his brother stopped their horses, and gazed down upon the enormous limbo lying empty beneath them.

"You err to say that its tale is told. For none but God can ever know its fulness," answered the other. "None shall count the tears, the noble acts of self-denial,

the triumphs of faith, the flight of the souls that won liberty and winged to their Father in Heaven from these tenebrous courts."

But Sir Archer had more immediate and personal concerns upon his mind.

"Be that as it may. Heart of man is small, and until we learn the secret of Felix, and what measures we are called upon to make for him, I can find little space in my soul to mourn other sorrows and pity other men. There is a mystery here. Wherefore have they kept his own father out of their plans?"

"I asked Burgoyne the same question when taking leave of him at Dartmouth last week; and he was frank with me. In a word, they do not trust us."

"Not trust us, Septimus!"

"Even so. They do not trust us not to tell the truth! Did we know where Felix was got, and were we commanded by the law to declare it, their belief is that we should obey the law and reveal the truth. By keeping us in ignorance a little longer such a danger is avoided. There is reason in that. Come, let us pursue our way, and ride round the further side of 'the Triangle.' Then we will return to Prince Hall. Ever bear in mind, my dear Archer, how swiftly time flies. You will welcome your daughter again in two years, and presently we have reason to hope that the world will forgive your son also, and be no longer jealous of his liberty, as at present."

They rode to Rundlestone, then turned homeward and proceeded along the northern side of that space known as 'the Triangle.' As they returned to Two Bridges, their way led them nigh the entrance to Bair Down, and it happened that Mr. Jacko Caunter was just

emerging from his outer gate, as Sir Archer and his brother passed by.

"What ho! Jacko Caunter, well met," said the Reverend Septimus. "Two bereaved fathers are my brother and you. Yet I wager that neither feels unhappy. Is Charity a good sailor? A senseless question, however, for who can tell what they make of the sea until they have journeyed upon it?"

The farmer looked puzzled.

"This is all a foreign tongue to me, your reverence," he answered. "A bereaved father! 'Is Charity a good [illegible]-?' But wait! I mind now that there was talk of Cherry and Ben going to America along with Cap'n Burgoyne and his lady."

"Talk, Jacko! Why, 't was a settled thing. Surely you are aware that at this moment the *Sea Lion* is leaving Dartmouth with Mr. and Mrs. Gun among her passengers?"

"Nay, your reverence, that I 'll swear is not happening. My girl and her husband — I went to see 'em in Plymouth a week ago me, and all was settled according to my desire. In a word, they do not go to America."

"But Burgoyne booked their passage, and entered their names."

"I only tell you what I know."

"'T is common talk — all men are aware that they depart to-day."

"What all men declare, none should believe. I know that Gun and Cherry bide with us. Think you we could have parted from her at Bair Down? They came home last night. Look yonder if you can still doubt. There is Benjamin digging in the croft across the valley. He was born to farming. He is my son — a very fine, fearless

man, and a glutton to work. Why should he go from me? He will follow in my footsteps and, when I go to heaven — thirty or forty years hence — it will be Gun that has Bair Down, and his family after him."

"What more right and natural? But there will be no little consternation at Dartmouth, Jacko. To the last it was understood that your daughter and her husband sailed with the Burgoynes."

Mr. Caunter grinned.

"My mouth is shut," he said. "But no doubt you are right. However, you can't blame a father for keeping his daughter beside him if it was to be done."

"There is a mystery here; you know more than you are pleased to tell us, Jacko," declared Sir Archer. "I am half in a mind to command you to speak on pain of my displeasure."

"Don't — don't do that, your honour. You and me was thought impatient men once on a time, but not now — not now. I grant you it is surprising that these two should have changed their minds so sudden. Yet, maybe, they never changed their minds at all! It is a mystery; but it won't long bide one. I lay you 'll know all about it before you sleep. Mr. Trinny is riding home again from Dartmouth by this time, and what there is to tell will be his news, though mine is the credit, as you 'll hear."

They parted, and it was not very many hours later when Trueman arrived at Prince Hall. The brothers had made their meal, but a good dinner waited for Mr. Trinny, and he found himself more than ready to do justice to it. They would not listen to him until he had ate and drank, then he related the simple facts and lifted a mighty load off Sir Archer's spirit.

"The *Sea Lion* is a fine ship," he began, presently, "a very fine ship, gentlemen, a tea clipper engaged for this special journey by arrangement with Captain Burgoyne himself. Not less than a hundred Americans return to their native land in her, and all is done by arrangement with the government. But Benjamin Gun, as you have discovered to-day, did n't go after all. Indeed, 't was never meant that he should do so. He 's very happy where he is, and his father-in-law wanted him to stop, and his wife did n't wish to leave her mother. So there was a spare bunk in the ship — two in fact — and it seemed a pity not to fill 'em up. Well, there was no lady anxious to sail, but there was a gentleman. He went safely and secretly under the name of Benjamin Gun, and I dare swear that your honours won't have any very great difficulty in guessing his real name."

Then Trinny abandoned the light touch, and spoke with greater seriousness.

"Yes, Sir Archer, 't was Jacko Caunter hit on the plan, and it has been a grief to all to keep the secret plot so long from you; but when you came to know the truth, Master Felix and Captain Burgoyne both felt that you would say they had done right. Never has the law been so hungry to catch an escaped prisoner; never have such cunning, far-reaching agencies been set to work. And they are still working throughout the country. But all is well now, and Master Felix will have the new world in which to lead his new life. And you will live to see him shine for truth and virtue and those high causes you have at heart. He and I rode past here long before break of day, and he blessed your sleeping heads as he passed by. 'T is a wonderful tale, come to think of it, and none forgot — not one. I had speech with them before I left

the ship, and the last thing Captain Burgoyne did was to write me an order for ten thou" and pounds. 'In my judgment, Trinny,' says he, 'there 's one man comes better out of this than you, or I, or the whole pack of us. And that is Lot Fenford, the executioner. What think you?' 'Right — ab-so-lutely!' I answered the gallant man. And now I have to get ten thousand pounds to Master Lot, as a salve for his troubles."

Sir Archer was deeply moved; he rose and shook Trueman's hand; and then he shook his brother's.

"I thank God for this intelligence," he said. "It rounds the terrible tale; it is an unutterable blessing to know my son will be hunted no more but suffered to regain his self-respect, and to go amongst his fellow-creatures and live and breathe a free man once again. May all that is best in his nature win scope for development in the great country to which he goes; may the poison that has vitiated his spirit and brought him to these awful straits be driven out for ever. I ask only that God will spare me to see the boy with his feet planted upon the right road. Then I can depart in peace."

"Your daughter sent a score of final messages. In two years time she will be with you again — with a young 'Fighting Bob' in her lap, if I 'm a prophet! And now, farewell; I must to my wife with the news that all is as it should be. I may tell you that Master Felix hath of late spent his time very snugly at the *Ring o' Bells*, and my Amelia Ann is deep in love with him. 'T will take me all my time to console her for the young hero's departure. Cheero! gentlemen, cheero!"

Trueman Trinny departed, and the brothers spoke of him.

"That man has the stuff of heroes in his bones. Who would guess, Septimus, that under his genial and laughter-loving outward show there hides such amazing courage and strength of purpose? While there are Englishmen like Trinny, we need not grudge America her Robert Burgoyne. It is impossible to value such men. They are above price or recompense. They go their shining way, and one esteems the privilege of coming in contact with them."

"It is a quality of greatness to esteem greatness," answered the Reverend Septimus. "For your sake were all these things done; in your presence these men felt themselves beside a hero, whose deeds are embalmed in the history of his country. And of all that you have done, Archer, the mightiest act has been this accomplished in your old age. Through such grief and tribulation as falls to the lot of few fathers, you have come to self-conquest. You have left the hardest battle that man is called upon to fight until the last. But you have won it, brother!"

"Not so," answered the other. "It has been won for me. Had I not been blessed abundantly by the comfort of greater hearts than my own — and yours above all the rest — my neck would not have bowed or my spirit yielded. No man can stand alone or pursue his way without the aid of his fellow-man. For good or evil each depends upon the environment of humanity; and blessed are they who, at the time of trial, shall find themselves encircled by a ring of loving hearts and noble natures. Nothing is impossible then. Life has wrought with me, and cast down old values and established new ones. My ancient opinions had become part of me, Septimus. They cost me agonies as they were cut away; but heights

that are fairer and truer have arisen upon those old foundations in my soul. I have been lonely with a son and a daughter beside me; but I am not lonely now, though an ocean separates us henceforth. I am nearer to Felix, I am nearer to my Miranda, than I have yet been, because my dim eyes have been a little opened, my armour of prejudice a little weakened. I can see that my girl and boy echo the age to come; that their young spirits anticipate that enthusiasm for humanity which lies at the root of all advance in this sorrow-laden world. I have received this immense knowledge from them, and accepted it in humility and thankfulness."

For a moment the other old man could not speak. He patted his brother's hand.

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